Mopsy

By

Kate Tannatt Woods

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MOPSY

HER TANGLES AND TRIUMPHS

BY

KATE TANNATT WOODS

AUTHOR OF "SIX LITTLE REBELS," "DR. DICK," "OUT AND ABOUT," ETC., ETC.

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"If every one will mend one,
The world will be mended."

PREFACE.

COME with me to Tangletown, my dear friends, young and old, boys and girls, fathers and mothers; we have journeyed together for many years, and the companionship has been precious, to one, at least.

Tangletown is not far away; it is at your very doors. You can look into it from your windows, and brighten it by your presence at any time. Let us each grasp one thread of this wondrous tangle, and work on, until we unravel the great and complicated knot sometimes called "Social Problems;" to us they will be simply known as "Tangles." Come; a little child shall lead us, and the end will be Peace.

Faithfully your friend,

KATE TANNATT WOODS.

SALEM, MASS., 1896.

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MOPSY.

CHAPTER I.

MOPSY AT HOME.

"WHEN the floor is scrubbed you may come in, Natty; and not before."

"But I tell you that I have a posy for mother. A man dropped it in the street. I picked it up and washed it off, and it's a beauty."

"Give it to me through the door-crack, then, and run away like a good boy until the floor is too dry for tracking. Natty dear, if you can have the good luck to pick up some more pennies by selling papers, please do; and you shall buy mother a small glass of jelly all yourself, and I will not have to leave her this evening."

"The boarders will be coming soon, Mopsy," expostulated the boy, who was quite determined to have his way.

"Never mind. You go and sell some papers, and get back in time for supper."

The speaker was a young girl of fourteen, with a marvellous head of beautiful light hair, which contrasted strangely with her dark eyes and long, drooping, almost black lashes.

She was very simply, even poorly, dressed. She was on her knees, scrubbing the floor of a large room, where a dozen or more wooden chairs were piled up in one corner, and two long pine tables were pushed against the wall. Opening from this room was a smaller one, with a bed and a lounge in it, a few chairs, and a small table covered with work.

Before the bed stood a rude but tidy screen covered with gay cretonne, and from behind this screen came a woman's gentle voice, asking, —

"What did Natty want, dear?"

"He brought you a flower, mother," said the girl; "and I have put it in this empty bottle. See; it is a beauty,—a real Japonica, and fresh too. I will put it on the little shelf, where you can see it without turning your head."

"Thank you, daughter. Did Natty go out again?"

"Yes, mother; I made him. My floor is wet, and Natty's old shoes bring in such a lot of mud."

"Keep the child in all you can, my dear; he meets strange people outside, and the boy is easily influenced. It is always hard for him to say 'No.'"

Mopsy sighed as she turned away and resumed her work. Something she had heard in church confirmed her own feeling, that good-nature was not a virtue if it made one so amiable that a positive "No" could not be said against temptation. The dear invalid mother was always

making excuses for Natty; he was her baby, her pet, and also her constant care and anxiety.

Mopsy saw what was right and proper by instinct; but Natty blundered into mischief constantly.

The girl was too busy to spend much time in sighing; for it was nearly time for tea, and the boarders would soon come trooping in, tired and hungry. She dried the floor carefully, put the long tables in place, and covered them with strips of white cloth. She was a young housekeeper, and yet a tidy one. "The white cloth," she had said to her mother, "can be washed and boiled, and always be kept sweet and clean; and you know that is your rule, mother dear, — cleanliness and care, no matter how poor."

After the scrubbing was over, Mopsy made her own simple toilet, — a clean gingham gown, with a new white apron, and her beautiful hair fastened with a knot of

ribbon. Some of the boarders were sure to remember Mopsy's hair-ribbons. While she dressed, a savory beef stew boiled and bubbled on the stove which stood in one corner of the large room.

"How lovely your hair is, my child!" said Mrs. Howard, as she watched her daughter from the bed; "it covers you like a cloak, when you let it fall. No wonder the boarders have nicknamed you 'Mopsy.'"

"Not for its want of care, mother," said the girl; "but I have half a mind to sell it to the barber on the next block. He is always teasing me for it, and he will pay me enough to buy you the wheel chair which you need so much. If you only would consent, mother dear; for it is so warm and uncomfortable during these warm spring days."

"No, no, my little Netta," said the mother; "I am fond of the golden locks. They may bring you a fortune some day;

and the invalid's chair would be worth very little to me, since we have only two rooms to move about in."

"And my boarders fill up every nook twice a day. Wasn't it a happy thought, mother? Now you can feel sure of the rent, every week; Natty can be kept in school; and, rough as some of the men are, they are always gentle and kind to me. There is another one coming, a man from the 'Lighting Works.' They say he is quite a gentleman; he wants to take his meals here to be handy to his business and to look after the men better; he will be sure to keep the rest in order, if they need it."

"They never do, child, when the screen is put aside, and they see me lying here. The roughest man has a kind heart hidden away, if we can only find it."

"O mother, did you see the little fellow they call 'Spud' look at you, last night? He had never seen you before; and he

thought you were dead, for you had closed your eyes, and your face was so white. It was one of your bad days yesterday, dear; but this shall be a good one."

"Where does Spud belong, daughter?"

"I do not know. He came in with the tall boy who works in the harness-shop. Natty says he hasn't any mother; only a father who goes off on a spree very often, and then beats the little fellow."

"This is a hard, hard neighborhood for you, my sweet girl. Think of our living in a crowded tenement-house at the North End! It seems like a cruel dream to me; and, sometimes, I think it will all come out right in the morning. It must come *some* morning, if we can only be patient, and wait for the dawning."

The invalid closed her eyes, and seemed to be sleeping; but her child knew better. Young as she was, Mopsy had already learned that she must be the burden-bearer for the family; and her cheerful spirit often

sustained her mother, who could not avoid thinking of the past.

"Well, mamma dear," said the girl, "here we are, and just now it is night, and I must ring my bell for Natty, and put clean towels over the hall sink for the men, and then make some dumplings for my stew. How nice it all is to know how to cook, and to have you right here to tell me if I go wrong! Did you hear what Jim Lahey said about my bread to-day, mother?"

"No, dear; was the bread good?"

"Jim said I must have learned to make it of an Irish cook, for it was the finest he had ever tasted. I wanted to tell him that my lady mother had taught me; but I remembered what you had said about never being free in speech or manner with any of them, and so I merely said, 'Thank you.'"

"Are both of the long tables full now, Netta?"

"Yes, mother; and no place for Natty;

so he helps me wait. And Mrs. Gaffney in No. 8, she said she would come in any time to help, for a plate of soup; and I think I must ask her, for the boys are all so hungry, and it is hard getting the tea and stew at once, for so many; and it makes it hard to collect the money, too, before they go out. I wish I had more hands and more feet."

"Netta, you must have Natty help you more; let him stand at the coffee and tea, and pour for you."

"Oh, you precious dear! he could never do it; he would fill the cups too full, and slop on my floor. Mrs. Gaffney will do better, mother; and I have a fine plan. Yesterday, I asked the man at the grocery store if he would sell me a large dry-goods box; and he said, 'If you want to set up housekaping, indade I will, miss.' So I told him you were sick, and I wanted to make a kind of table of it for mugs and cups for my boarders; and then he looked sharp at

me for a minute, and said, 'Oh, ho! so you are the foreign lady's little girl that keeps a hot cup of tay and a dish of soup for thim as kin pay fer it. Well, good luck to yer, miss. The size of that box ye like would bring me a good price; but seeing it's yerself, ye shall have it for twinty cents, and I'll put it above the stairs fer ye meself.' So I bought another one, a small one; and that is to be here by the side of your bed. I will cover it with your shawl, and you shall be our cashier, and take the money, as the ladies do in the fine eating-houses up town. Does that please you, mother dear?"

"I shall be glad to do it, Netta, and thank you for your thoughtfulness; I shall not grieve then over being so helpless."

"Helpless? Why, you dear precious mother! you keep all the accounts, make our clothes, and mend them, hear our lessons, and"—

"But, my love, I am still unable to walk one step," said the invalid.

"Who could walk with a back injured like yours?" asked Mopsy. "Why, you dear thing, the best of all my help comes from seeing you so calm and patient; but here comes Natty, and now we must get the mugs and table in order."

Natty, a good-looking boy of twelve, entered and whistled, as he went straight to his mother's bedside.

"Wasn't that a real out-and-out beauty for a posy, mother?"

"It was, indeed, my boy; but I feel sorry for the loser. I thank you for thinking of me; now go and help sister; for she works far too hard. Help her all you can, Natty."

"I always do; she needn't complain," said the boy.

"She has not complained, — she never does; but she works very hard to keep you in school. If it were not for her, we might starve."

"I wouldn't," said Natty with boyish bluntness; "no sir! Why, I just won eight

marbles and two alleys from a boy, and then I sold one of the best ones, and bought some buns at the bakeshop."

"Did you bring the buns home?"

"No, of course not; I ate them up. You won't catch me starving."

"Natty dear, I wish you would think of others sometimes."

"I can't when I am hungry; and that's all the time. You see, I am growing now, and I'm always empty inside — as empty as a tin can."

"Natty dear, please remember one thing at least, and that is, to speak correctly. You are fast learning the rough manners and speech of the boys about here."

"Why, mother; I couldn't begin to talk as these North Enders do! You should hear them. It's two swears to one plain word, nearly always."

"Oh, my boy! I do not wish to hear them; it makes me wretched to think that you must be among them."

In an instant the boy's arms were about her neck. "She sha'n't be wretched. She's a dear little sick mother; and next time her bad Natty will bring her home a bun; poor little marmy dear."

A few tears fell on the boy's face, and the sick woman was comforted. Surely nothing could seriously harm Natty while he could love her so. Natty's caresses always silenced reproof.

He was growing more and more careless daily. His selfishness was apparent to every one but his doting mother; and Mopsy mourned over it in secret. Very often, she performed Natty's tasks and her own, rather than quarrel with him, lest her mother should be disturbed.

Mrs. Howard, like too many mothers, was not wise enough to see the difference between the real affection which labors unceasingly for the loved ones, and the impulsive demonstration which covers a selfish heart.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW BOARDER.

"DID you get mother's jelly?" asked Mopsy as her brother came from her mother's room looking pleased and tidy.

His mother had combed his hair with her thin, delicate hands, and Natty always enjoyed having his hair dressed. He was a peculiar boy, and found a special delight in being waited upon. He had the faculty of making his playmates serve him; and, like most selfish people, he accepted all their attentions with slight thanks. Now and then, some bright boy would rebel, and utter an emphatic, "Do it yourself;" but, generally, his coaxing ways overcame all objections, and Natty obtained whatever he set his heart upon. Selfish people are found out sooner or later, and they

seldom hold the love of others for a long time.

"Did you get mother's jelly?" repeated Mopsy, when she found that her question was not answered.

"No; my banker objected," said Natty.

"Didn't you sell any papers?"

"Not a paper."

"O Natty, I'm so sorry; for I promised mother a bit of toast and jelly to-night, she is so tired of everything; and now I cannot get out for it."

"I'll go," said a little piping voice.

Mopsy was so surprised she let some of the flour and water she was mixing, fall upon her clean floor.

"I'll go, miss, in a jiffy; just say what kind she likes best. Old Mammy Dixy has tip-top; she makes it her own self." The speaker was little Spud. Mopsy looked at Natty, but that worthy was serenely whistling as he laid the knives upon the table, unconscious of jelly or any other duty.

"I do not like to trouble you," said Mopsy; "but mother eats so little."

"I know," said the boy in a half-whisper; "it ain't the leastest bit of trouble, and it would make me feel better. You see, I didn't always do everything I might have done for *her*, and now I can't sleep for thinking about it; she's dead, you know, and I can't get her back. Just you give me the chink, miss, and I'll have it here before the men come in; I'd love to."

There was no doubting the little fellow's earnestness. Mopsy gave her bowl of thickening to Mrs. Gaffney, and went into the next room. She soon returned with some change, which she gave Spud, saying in a low tone, "A small glass of currant, please; she likes that, and mother is particular about her food, she eats so very, very little."

"All right," said Spud, and away he darted. Natty resolutely avoided looking at his sister. He knew he had done wrong,

but he did not care. His mother would not know, for Mopsy carefully kept all little worries from her; and as to Mopsy, why, she could only look sorry, while Natty was fast forgetting the tenderness of heart which had once made him sorry for others. He did not utter a word, until a tramping was heard upon the stairs, and several men and boys came up and washed themselves at the sink in the hall. They came in quietly, and took their places; some from the Lighting Works, some from the coal-yard near by, some from wretched homes, but all bearing the price of a good hot supper in their hands.

They were mostly young men, save one, the new man from the Works, — "A boss," some of them said; and yet none of them quite knew. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a long brown mustache, and clear blue eyes which seemed to see everything all at once.

He was greatly surprised when he saw

Mopsy, and he was pleased to observe the politeness with which all addressed her.

Jim Lahey had told him that a man could get a good plate of honest beef soup, some bread, and a cup of tea or coffee for ten cents, and the cooking good enough for a priest. The gentleman did not give any name nor introduce himself. He bowed to Mopsy, and took the seat she assigned him. He was evidently much pleased with the perfect neatness of the small apartment. Every plate had a large slice of bread beside it in addition to the knife and fork and spoon; also a large mug filled with steaming tea or coffee, according to the taste of the boarder. It was very difficult to serve so many rapidly; but all ate with an appetite which the invalid in the bed near by envied, if her tender heart ever quite knew the meaning of envy.

Mrs. Gaffney and Natty and Mopsy had all they could do for a little while. When their hunger was satisfied the men

and boys joked each other, and lingered a little, quite reluctant to leave such a comfortable spot. To some of them it was a paradise. Just before the meal was over Mrs. Gaffney rapped upon the table with a large spoon.

"Whist now, lads!" said Jim Lahey. "Wait a bit till Mother Gaffney slings some good Irish at you."

"That's more than ye can do yerself, Jim," retorted Mrs. Gaffney; "but it's not the likes of me to speak, but the young lady herself."

Instantly every voice was hushed, and every eye was turned toward Mopsy, who stood, rosier than ever, near the window.

"I only wanted to say, young gentlemen," — she always called them young gentlemen, and it sounded well to many of them, who had never heard themselves addressed as anything but "you fellows" or "rough" boys, — "I wanted to say," said Mopsy in a clear, sweet voice, "that here-

after you will please pay the cashier as you go out at the other door; and I hope you will be kind enough to step softly. Mamma will be our cashier. I want to thank some of you, too, for bringing me so many new boarders. Next week, we hope to have another table here by the windows, with plates for six; but no one can come in who will not sign our rules. Most of you know them: No tobacco, no loud or coarse talking, no profanity, no untidy hands or uncombed hair. We are all poor here; but we can all be tidy, kind, and good-natured. One thing more; if any of you can bring a little sister to wait upon the table, I will be glad to pay her for her help."

A dozen hands were raised at once. Evidently, many of the boys had sisters who would be only too happy to step into such a home. For some reason, Mopsy saw a little thin hand at the far end of the table, and she asked in a kind and encour-

aging tone, "How old is your little sister, Spud?"

"My twin, miss; but a deal brighter and smarter."

"Does she go to school?"

"Yes, miss, when she has shoes."

"Then bring her here, and she shall earn some shoes, and go to school."

Spud's eyes sparkled, and Mopsy was not slow to see the look of disappointment on the faces of the other boys who had raised their hands.

"I only need one little helper now, boys," she said; "and I will try this little girl first, because Spud has been kind to my sick mother."

"Good for little Spud," said kind-hearted Jim Lahey, as he rose and led the way to the cashier's table in the next room.

Lords and ladies, and fine society belles and beaux, may know all the rules of etiquette ever written; but I question much if any of them ever felt a finer

sense of the respectful proprieties of life than these rough working boys and men as they stepped softly into that chamber of suffering.

The screen had been turned away; and on the white quilt, spotless enough for a palace, was a little tray of foreign workmanship, where each laid his offering and passed out. The new-comer, already termed "the boss" by the boys, went last, hardly daring to turn his eyes towards the face, which he felt must be that of a lady. He hesitated, attempted to speak, gave one quick glance at the fine head resting upon the pillow, and laid down his money without a word.

The moment he reached the sidewalk below, he caught Lahey by the arm, and exclaimed, "Who are these people? Can you tell me?"

"Born ladies, as you can see, sir," said Lahey.

"Has the mother always been there — in this way, I mean?"

"Devil a bit do I know! Miss Mopsy started into this thing more than two years ago with just Mose and me, and she's supporting them all now."

"Did you ever speak to the mother?" asked the stranger.

"Spake to her? Bless you, man! whin we first went there she talked to us, and said some of the powerfullest things I ever heard, not excepting his riverence, Father Connolly, who can talk at you till you feel as wake and mane as a licked puppy."

"See here, Lahey; that tray on her bed is of foreign manufacture; I have seen such in Turkey."

"That's not surprising, sir, seein' that America is free to Turks as well as the likes of us; but how came your honor in Turkey?"

"That's neither here nor there, my man. I choose to be here just now, and although I may have been a fool in my

time, I am wise enough to know good people when I see them. Tell me who helped Mopsy, as you call her."

"We always call her *Miss* Mopsy, sir."

"Quite right, Lahey, quite right; but who gave Miss Mopsy her start? Who found the capital to get the dishes and the necessary things?"

"Well, sir, it's little help she ever had save for her own hands, and her mother's head to think for her. Miss Mopsy is old for her years, like all of us who have to fight our way. As near as I can tell, it was this way. There had been a lot of talk about cooking-schools, and so on; and one day Miss Mopsy went to a class they had at the Industrial Home, with a girl that lives near here, and that girl was my cousin; and when Miss Mopsy went home she told her ma that the girls of the cooking-class were learning the same things her ma had taught her, and she asked her ma if it was not better

than making shirts for the sweat-shops, or knitting worsted things for about five cents a day; and her ma thought so, and pretty soon there was a little sign down at the door, and another in their window, saying: —

'HOT SOUP EVERY DAY AT TWELVE O'CLOCK.'

"Some of us had met Natty, — that's the brother, — and he took us in; and so it's got bigger and bigger, and we fellows just for a joke call it Miss Mopsy's Hotel; and you just bet we don't never leave there, unless we are fired out. At first she could only afford tin plates and cups, but now we are getting on style, and we ain't a bit the worse for it. I heard the Lady — most of us calls her 'Lady' — say that we must have paper napkins soon, for she thought it taught the boys good manners."

"Do you know how the lady was hurt?"

"You're good at questions, sir. Well, I just know that it was some kind of an accident, and she can't be moved without two or three to do it. Some of the 'Soshiated Charity' folks wanted to take her off to a hospital; but she said 'No,' and talked pretty plain to 'em. So, now, two nice young doctors come every Saturday, and they move her and make the bed all nice; for you see she doesn't exactly lie down or sit up, and they say she never has since Natty was a little kid."

"Is it the spine, I wonder?" the stranger said musingly.

"Shure, I can't tell that, sir. Natty says it's the paralleasis, or something so she can't move her feet; but when she has good days, she sews a lot. She mends this old coat for me with her own hands, and any of us fellows would fight for her and Miss Mopsy."

"I don't doubt it, Lahey; you have a good, kind heart I'm sure. I thank you

very much for telling me these things. Good-by; I'm going down this way."

"Would you be leaving your name behind for convanience sake, sor?"

"Captain" — the stranger stopped, hesitated a little, and simply said, "only John Brown; that is all."

"I'll find out if that's true," said Lahey as he turned toward the Works; "he's the cut of a gentleman and the speech of one, and the captain's slipped off his tongue unbeknownst like."

CHAPTER III.

A TRANSFORMATION.

THE next day Spud came early with his sister, a poor, neglected little thing with a very dirty St. Cecilia face, and a very unsaintly odor about her clothing.

"Poor little thing," said Mopsy; "who takes care of you?"

"No one, miss," said the child, as she glanced about the large tidy room.

"Come in here and see my mother," said Mopsy.

The invalid held out her hand as the child approached.

"'No mother' is written plainly in her eyes," said the lady.

"Our mother died a year ago," said Spud, who was standing in the doorway, anxiously watching his sister's reception. "She isn't

very clean, ma'am; but I couldn't find no towel, and the soap is all gone."

"Where is your father, Spud?"

"Don't know, miss; haven't seen him since last Sunday, and to-morrow's Saturday. Maybe he's shoved again."

"What is that, Spud?"

"Maybe he's gone to the Island again; he drinks, lady."

"And do you children stay all alone when he's away?"

"Yes, ma'am. You see, the landlady, she says she ain't a-goin' to put us out, long as the rent is paid; and he always does that; and I can pick up jobs, and Tishy minds the landlady's baby for some bread and milk; and now I'm goin' to work regular, 'tween schools. If it warn't for school and their makin' us go, I could take good care of Tishy."

"I wonder that the authorities do not take you both away from your father," said the lady, still holding the little dirty hand in hers.

"They've threatened to; but you see, he is home sometimes, and then he gets good wages, and Miss O'Brien, — she's the landlady, — she says she'll look after us, so we are there, and what I'm afraid of is, they will come now an' carry Tishy off where I can't see her; and so if you would take her, and let her do something for Miss Mopsy, why Miss O'Brien says she'll tell 'em a kind lady is caring for her; and I don't want Tishy to leave me, 'cause she's all there is but father, and she's a sight like Her."

The boy's chest was moving with suppressed feeling, and a succession of noises in his throat showed plainly that his one terror in life was being separated from Tishy.

"What is her name, Spud?"

"Letitia, ma'am, and mine is Jamsie; but the boys call me Spud, owing to my smallness and short legs."

"How old are you?"

"Eleven last month, ma'am; and we are twins."

"Why, your sister is not nearly as large as you, Jamsie, and you are very small for your age."

"Yes, miss; we are stunted, Miss O'Brien says, 'count of bad air and not enough to eat steady. When father's right we have plenty; then, again, we only get what I can pick up."

"I think we will keep your sister, at least until your father returns; but we must have her made neat and tidy. Perhaps we can make a little bed for her here, and then my daughter can teach her some out of school-hours."

"I would be glad to leave her here, lady. You see, it's not good for Tishy to be learnin' the bad talk she hears in our street; and if she can stay with you now I can see her every day."

Spud ate his breakfast that morning with a bright smile on his face. As he passed the cashier he paused a moment to say, "I'll try and pay you some way, ma'am, for being kind to Tishy."

The child, who was seated on a little stool, eating some bread and coffee, called out a cheerful, "Good-by, Jamsie;" and the boy went away with a lighter heart than he had known for weeks.

When the boarders were all gone, and the dishes once more put in their places, Mopsy said, "Shall we have lessons now, mother?"

"I think Tishy will be your lesson for to-day. We must cut those tangled locks, and get some fresh clothing for her, as soon as you can give her a vigorous bath."

While the invalid made an apron of Mopsy's into a dress, and put a tuck into some little skirts, Mopsy, with Mrs. Gaffney's aid, gave the child a thorough bath, after consigning her matted hair to the fire.

Before school was out and Natty came bounding in, a new creature sat where the dirty "St. Cecilia" was seen at breakfast-time.

"If she was the governor's daughter she couldn't be prettier," said Mrs. Gaffney, as she surveyed the child.

"You mean she would be considered pretty if she were some rich man's child," said the invalid.

"That's it, ma'am; there's many a baby on Beacon Street that is covered with kisses, not near so fine as this little one, and she no one to love her."

"Yes, I have; Jamsie loves me," said the child; "and I love Jamsie."

"And you must love these kind ladies too, for making you all swate and clean."

Tishy took the invalid's thin white hand, and pressed it to her cheek, while her eyes seemed to say, "If I dared to love you, I should."

"Tishy is going to be a good little maid, and earn herself some shoes," said Mopsy. "To-night she will pass the mugs, and help me at supper."

"Yes, she is Netta's little girl now,"

said the lady, "and I expect she will be very useful."

That very day the boxes came home, and were put in place. When Jim Lahey came to his supper he made a new proposal.

"Are you going to keep the little kid here at night?" he asked.

"Yes; until her father forbids it."

"Then supposin' you make her the finest bed in town by turning your box this way?"

"The very thing," said Mopsy; "but would there be room?"

"Room, is it? Why, many's the time I've put my own long shins into a box like that, and slept like a prince."

"Perhaps I can help you, Lahey," said a deep voice; "we used to make entire sets of furniture out of packing-cases in the army."

Mopsy and Lahey turned, to see the tall form of the new boarder.

"I should like to make it comfortable at night and neat by day," said Mopsy.

"If you will allow me to do it for you, I think you will be satisfied," said the stranger.

"I shall be very glad, sir, and so will mother, if it will not cost too much."

"I can safely promise you that the expense will be nothing. I have some hinges and a curtain, which will make it complete."

Mopsy held a hurried consultation with her mother, and then returned to the large room, saying, —

"My mother thanks you, sir, and will be glad to pay you for your trouble."

"And count on me for lifts, Captain," said Jim Lahey.

For some reason, none knew why, Jim had dubbed the stranger "Captain," and, in time, all the boarders addressed him in the same manner. His bearing was that of a gentleman, his language correct, and his manners, as Jim said, "fine enough for the President of the United States."

Where he came from, and why he chose to associate with the rough lads, or work at the Electric-Light Work, no one could tell. Even Jim Lahey, who boasted that he could find out anything he wished to, only succeeded in learning that the stranger's name was written John Brown on the books; that he was filling the place of a sick clerk; that his employers pronounced him a perfect gentleman and a fine scholar.

For two evenings, the Captain worked upon the large packing-case, and in all that time he had not once seen the invalid in the next room, although he often heard her voice, and in passing out dropped his money into the little tray.

"What do you propose doing with this small box?" asked the Captain, after Tishy's bed was complete.

"I wanted to make a table of it to stand near my mother's bed. It will be nice for her work, and her hands are never idle; then she likes to see the boys as

they come and go, and we can have a little box there for her checks and money."

"We might make a shelf under here for books, and enclose this below for a closet," said the Captain.

"That would be delightful, and then dear mother need not have her bed covered with work. She is so tidy and nice, I know it distresses her, although she does not complain."

"We will attack that to-morrow night," said the Captain.

CHAPTER IV.

MOPSY AS GUARDIAN.

LITTLE by little the stranger grew in favor with the boys. When he first came, some of them wished him "a thousand leagues under the sea;" others thought he was a "Nancy," and some feared he might be "a policeman in disguise;" but the manufacture of Tishy's lounge-bed set all hearts at rest. Boys respect a capable man; and the Captain had not only made a neat little lounge-bed, which drew out at night and rested on its feet, but he had arranged, on top, some little shelves, protected by a neat curtain, where Miss Mopsy could conceal her coffee-pot, tea-pot, and all the usable things, not pretty to look at when not in use. After this achievement, the Captain became a favorite. At break-

fast, in the early morning, very little talking was done; but at night, all the tongues were loose, and many a joke flew back and forth. Gradually these jokes took on a new form, and new topics were introduced. The boys began to hear something of countries which were only mentioned in school and then forgotten. The Industrial Home on North Bennett Street was discussed; for some of the boys enjoyed its blessings in the evening, and little Spud knew all about the reading-room. Two of the boarders had sisters in the cooking-class, and some of them were glad to know that their mothers found employment in the laundry.

As to the shoe-shop and the carpenters' workroom, were they not blessings to all who were fortunate enough to get in there? Mose knew; for the little screen, standing before the bed in the next room, Mose had made, and the boys paid for the stock out of their own pockets. Once or twice, when the boys were talking Mopsy thought

she saw a queer smile on the Captain's face; but no one else observed it, and Mopsy said to her mother, "The strange gentleman likes to hear the boys talk. Sometimes, when Brinley is boasting, he stops eating to hear what he has to say; and I think he wants them to eat slower, for he is always saying, 'Take time, boys, while I tell you the story of the sailor who was always in a hurry;' or perhaps he gives them something about the food to think of. Can you hear him when he is talking, mother?"

"His voice is so deep it is not always easy to hear above the clatter of the dishes. I wonder that our simple food suits him."

"Why not, mother? We always have a good variety; the soup is different every day; and the breakfast is better than they can get anywhere else for the money."

"Now Tishy is here to wait upon me, you can go to market with Natty every day, and perhaps a good stuffed bullock's

heart would not be a bad treat for the boys on Sunday. Your old friend, the butcher, will save some for you, and I will make the stuffing here on my tray."

"We must not get too extravagant, mother; we do not owe a cent now; and if the boys keep on through the spring as they have done this winter, you can have your chair, and sit up like a queen every day."

"You forget the moving back and forth, dear."

"Oh, no, mother; the visiting ladies have told me how it can be done. Think how pleasant it would be to sit at the window" — Mopsy paused. She remembered that nothing could be pleasant to see where ragged children, low saloons, and drunken men would be forever under their windows.

"I see a great deal from this window," said her mother with a smile. "If the room were larger, or my bed turned the other way, I could not enjoy so much."

"How many chimneys can you count, mother?"

"Over a hundred, dear; and the smoke is always changing, always curling up or down another way, never twice alike. Then, it is very droll to see the washing on the housetops; and I can tell when new tenants come in by the garments hung out."

"Is the old lady with her pipe all right, again?"

"Yes, dear; she must have been ill. I saw the curtain down for a week, and I thought she had gone; but one day the curtain rose again, and there she sat in a chair with a pillow behind her head, her broad ruffled nightcap as white as ever. To-day, she had her pipe once more, and now I know that she is happy."

"What a busy woman you are, mother; always weaving stories about these people we never know."

"I do know them, child; some of them, at least. Only yesterday, the children on

the fourth floor of that tall house behind us waved a ragged shawl at me, and I waved my handkerchief in return. I think their mother goes out to work, and fastens them in, and I am helping take care of them. See, there they are now! The little one is showing me an orange! How she laughs when I clap my hands together! Some one has given her a treat."

"On the whole, it would not be wise to move you into the next room," said Mopsy, as she bent over her mother's pillow to see the little strangers; "you would lose too many old friends here; and you are making some one happy.

"The strange gentleman asked me if his pounding disturbed you; and I said nothing disturbed you, except disorder and dirt. Isn't it true, mother?"

Her mother patted her cheek.

"You can't think what he said?"

"He looked at me for a moment very sharply, and then said,—

"'It would be strange if the kingdom of heaven should be located at the North End.'

"I couldn't answer him, and he went on with his work. He seems to love work. He is making Natty a shelf for his books; and he told him, yesterday, if he would bring home a good school report for a month, that he would give him a 'Robinson Crusoe' which had been around the world."

"I wish he might interest Natty; the boy is restless, and this life is hard for him."

"Harder than for us, mother?"

"He is constituted differently, Netta; he has neither your courage nor your patience. Under good training, Natty might be a good man. In this place, I dread to think what will become of him."

"If we move now, mother, we will lose the boarders."

"No; we must stay for the present, and do what we may to shield Natty."

The girl sighed, and drew her head from her mother's shoulder. "I must go," she said; "it is time to begin again. How strange it would seem to be free to run about as Natty does, and live in the air. I am shut up nearly as much as you, little mother, only I can use my feet."

"Thank Heaven for that, dear. You are my greatest comfort on earth."

A moment before, Mopsy was crying out in her heart against the injustice done her. Why was it always Natty? Why should she, only two years older, shield him? Why should he dash hither and thither, leaving her to bear all the burdens alone? Her mother did not seem to notice — did she really care? Was Natty her favorite child, or did she fear some unseen power which might drag him down into the sin and wickedness about them? All this flashed through her mind, and set her heart to throbbing, and unconsciously added pathos to her simple words, "I am

shut up nearly as much as you are, mother."

She could not believe that she had heard aright. She, Mopsy, the hard-working, hard-handed little girl, who only washed dishes and drudged for a crowd of rough, hungry boys, her "mother's greatest comfort"! The spring days were telling on her, and the close confinement made her head dizzy; but if — could it be true? Her greatest comfort? Mopsy felt like praying and crying in the same breath. She had walked away from the bed when her mother was speaking of Natty; but she went back now, and rested her face close to her mother's.

"Mopsy, are you crying, little girl? What is it? Are you tired out, or has something new gone wrong — tell me, dear?"

"I was only thinking that, perhaps, the stranger was right, mother. I don't mind being tired, now you have said that. I don't mind Natty's teasing, and his playing

after school, and the mud on the stairs, and all the other things, if you feel that way."

"Dear child, did you ever doubt it?"

"Sometimes, mother, when Natty has done wrong, and you are so easy with him, when his kisses seem to be better than all I can do, and — and — but it don't matter now, mother; you can't take it back, and you won't, will you? So, after all, the kingdom of heaven can be here, can't it, mother?"

"In our hearts, dear; and I can never take it back. Natty never will know the sad past as you know it; and, together, we will make his home so pleasant that he will come here first and always."

"Are you there, Miss Mopsy?" called Mrs. Gaffney in the hall.

"Yes," answered Mopsy.

"Then come out a bit while I speak to you."

In a moment or two, the girl returned, saying, —

"I am going out for a little, mother, and Mrs. Gaffney says she will see to the boys' supper."

"It will do her good to have the air, ma'am," said Mrs. Gaffney, "and she's a master one at marketing; so, if you please, Miss Mopsy, you may bring me a bit of liver while you are at it." Mopsy's face was white with dread as she put on her hat and hurried away.

CHAPTER V.

NATTY TRIES TRAVEL.

While Mrs. Gaffney talked eagerly to the invalid of all that was going on in the world outside, save the business which had taken her little daughter away, Mopsy was flying rapidly toward the schoolhouse where Natty was a pupil. She was frightened at the thought of meeting strangers, and bewildered by the tidings Mrs. Gaffney had brought her; but above all the tumult in her mind, she was constantly saying over and over to herself, —

"Mother must not know; whatever happens, she must not know now."

A pupil answered the bell — a girl about Mopsy's age, who stared at the visitor.

"I want to see Miss Stephenson, one of the teachers."

"Go round to the other door, and up two flights," said the girl shortly.

Mopsy was glad to go anywhere to put off the evil hour. She was in the building at last, and on her way up-stairs, when she remembered her mother's words, "We must do all we can to shield Natty." "I will ask the teacher not to speak of it before the scholars," she said; "for Natty is proud, and he will not come back if they know."

She reached the door at last, and knocked with trembling fingers. Another pupil opened it.

"Can I see Miss Stephenson?"

The lady came to the door.

"I would like to speak with you alone," said Mopsy.

"Certainly," said the lady as she closed the door.

"I am Natty Howard's sister, and I got your message. I thank you very much for sending it. We thought he was here, and

I dare not tell my sick mother, if you please" —

Here Mopsy's voice failed her, and the teacher said pleasantly, —

"I am very sorry. When you came with Natty to enter the school I noticed you. I remember your face; I promised to let you know if anything went wrong. Natty was not here all day yesterday; and he is usually so bright and good that I did not like to report him."

"All day yesterday!" exclaimed Mopsy.

"And has not been here to-day."

Mopsy caught her hand eagerly.

"O madam, it is as my mother feared, this wretched neighborhood will spoil him! But she must not know; it would kill her. And please, dear lady, do not tell the truant officer; let me find him, and bring him home. He is careless and thoughtless, and some of the big boys have tempted him."

Mopsy's tearful face and eager tones touched the teacher.

"I will do all I can to help you," she said. "This is his first offence, and perhaps it can be explained. He may have met with some slight injury, and have been taken to the hospital. I will not report him until I hear from you; for we all like Natty, he is so polite and good-natured."

"Thank you, miss, and as soon as I learn where he is I will send you word; only let the boys think he is at home with me."

"I am very sorry for you, child; perhaps you will think of some way to keep it from your mother. He was at home last night?"

"Oh, yes; he came in late; he was very tired, and soon went to sleep. He said he had been over to East Boston to see a big steamer."

"Foolish Natty! He needs a strong, firm hand to keep him from these evil companions."

It was useless to ask the teacher's assistance further; and Mopsy turned away,

thanking her again and again for her promise to keep the matter quiet.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" said the girl as she fairly staggered down the long stairs.

The day was warm for April; groups of children were playing in the gutters or on the walks, as she hurried on.

"If I only had one friend," said she, "only some one to ask, some one to care, or some way to spare mother and shield him"—

Just then a large dray turned the corner of the street close to her, and nearly ran over a little child.

Mopsy darted forward, and seized the little one from under the horse's feet; she did not stop to look about, but gave it to a girl on the walk, and hurried on.

As she turned into Endicott Street, she saw Spud going before her on his way to supper. His torn shoes clattered on the walk at every step, and his shabby hat hung down over one ear. He was whis-

tling, "Never Say Die," and Mopsy's sorrowful face lighted up.

"Spud," she said, "O Spud! could you do me a great kindness?"

"Is that you, Miss Mopsy? Why, I'd be proud to do anything for you."

"Spud, will you keep a secret, and never, never, tell one of the boys?"

"I'd cut my tongue out first, if it is anything of yours, Miss Mopsy."

"I want to find some one — a kind man — to look after Natty; he wasn't at school yesterday."

"That's bad. If one of us plays hookey, it's all right; but Natty, he's a different sort, miss."

"I know, Spud, but something must be done."

"If you was to ask Jim, he'd say go to 'Soshiated Charities.' Jim thinks they are good to cure all the troubles in the world."

"They do cure a great many, Spud; but Natty's name must not go down on their

books. You see, it would hurt mother, and we can care for ourselves; besides, it's too late to go there, now."

"Here comes the new boarder, the Cap'n; maybe he could help you, if you don't mind speakin' to him."

Before Mopsy could tell whether she minded or whether she dared, the tall stranger had overtaken them, and said kindly, —

"How does it happen that my landlady is out now, when she is usually preparing for us?"

"She's troubled about her brother, sir; she don't know just what to do, and I told her, maybe you could help her."

"I certainly will try, Miss Mopsy; if you will trust me."

The girl looked into his face eagerly.

"I will tell you, sir, as we walk on; if you are going up our street now."

"Yes; I was going in early to put some finishing touches to your table."

They walked on together, Mopsy explaining as they went, while the stranger listened eagerly.

"Only a foolish, boyish escapade," he said kindly; "it will all come right, my young friend, and we will find Natty at home, ready for his supper with the rest."

"You must not mention this," he said, turning to Spud; "or you will distress the lady who is trying to do so much for your sister."

Mopsy fairly flew home after this; all her trouble seemed to roll away at once when the Captain spoke; and when she entered the room, closely followed by Spud and the Captain, there was Natty standing at the window devouring a huge piece of bread.

It was still more than two hours before supper-time; and, as Mrs. Gaffney was at liberty, Mopsy took her basket, asking Natty to come with her, as she must bring home some marketing.

"If you will take Spud instead," said the Captain quietly, "I shall be glad to have your brother for an assistant."

Spud stole a glance at Tishy, who was seated on the foot of her new friend's bed, listening eagerly to a story, and then walked away with his young landlady.

"It's a queer world, ain't it, Miss Mopsy?"

"Why, Spud?"

"Why, you see everything seems to be going wrong, or else it seems to be going all right, and all of a sudden comes a change, and some big trouble, and you'd just as lieves die as not; but you can't; and then that trouble goes off, and it's all clear and pleasant, when down comes another, which knocks you flat. The whole world is full of tangles; and we are in 'em. Up in the corner of my room there's a spider's web, and I take heaps of fun watching it when I can't sleep, early in the morning. The old spider, he gets a fly in there, and

he snarls things up; but sometimes the fly fights his way out, and then I want to clap my hands. I get into the tangles lots of times, but I always fight out somehow. The first time father was shoved after *she* died it most killed me. I didn't eat, and I couldn't sleep, and it seemed as if the whole world hated Tishy and me; but I got to thinking about it, and I said, now if I fret I can't grow, and if I don't grow I can't help Tishy and earn a pretty little home for her, and I said I ain't to blame 'cause father goes wrong. Mother often told me so; and I mustn't let his going wrong spoil me; it must make me better."

Was Spud trying to comfort her? Was he a philosopher at eleven years of age?

Mopsy did not quite know, but she liked to hear him chatter. Perhaps her trouble was going away now that the Captain knew about it. If she could only tell mother it would be all right. Then came the thought — Spud had no one to tell; he was motherless.

"Was your mother very kind, Spud?"

"Oh, my, yes, Miss Mopsy! She knew about books; but, somehow, she had got in the tangles. She got consumption and died, and father's been worse since; and that's one of the queer things."

"Why, Spud?"

"You see, when she died he promised her to be steady and not drink, and to look after us, and get us in a better place, somewhere in the country; and, if he couldn't stand firm, not to let us suffer, but write to her folks. Now, what bothers me is this, Miss Mopsy, how a man could say such things to her when she was dying, and then keep drunk a week after the funeral. A promise to some one who is dying seems like a promise to God, Miss Mopsy."

"Did you promise anything, Spud?"

"Oh, yes! I signed it, and keep it here in this jacket pocket. It's worn a hole three times, but Miss O'Brien, she mended it. I'll read it to you if you like."

"Yes, Spud."

The boy produced a small blank book, much soiled, and read slowly, although he evidently knew it by heart: —

"I, James Manning, promise my dying mother to be temperate in all things. I will never drink intoxicating liquors, never use oaths nor any vile language; and I promise solemnly to care for my little sister, Letitia H. Manning, as long as we both shall live; and I pray that God will help me to be a good man, and live honestly and justly all my days."

"That is a grand promise, Spud."

"*She* wrote it, and here is her name close to mine. Her hand trembled when she put it down that day."

Mopsy looked over his shoulder.

"Why, that is Louisa Hunt, and your father's name is Manning!"

"Yes, that's another queer thing; it was her name before she married my father, and she used to write it that way, and once I

asked her why, and she said, 'For your sake and Tishy's.' And I said, 'Is it a tangle, mother?' and she said, 'Yes, Jamsie, it's a tangle; I hope it will all be fairly unwound some day.' You see, she had some relatives right here in Boston, some rich folks, but she never told us where."

"Won't your father tell you?"

"Oh, no; he hates 'em and curses 'em."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEAD MOTHER'S LEGACY.

ALL the pent-up energy of a long winter seemed to be cropping out at the North End as spring advanced. The faithful workers at the Industrial Home found applicants and visitors to the rooms rapidly increasing, while the Charity building was thronged day after day.

"There ain't room for us all," said Mose, "and I am one of the lucky ones. In a few weeks more I can make as pretty a table as you would want to see, Miss Mopsy."

"It can't beat Brinley's shoes," said Jim. "Did you see the pair he made for a young lady on Commonwealth Avenue? Real bang-up button ones, high enough to go wadin' in."

"That's the place for poor chaps; only the carpenter-shop ought to be five times bigger, and the shoe-shop too," said Mose.

"What about the printing-office, Inky? They say you can get a chance there, by and by."

"It won't be for the want of trying," said a tall lad nicknamed Inky.

"I tell yer the Home and the Soshiated is doing more good than all the churches in Boston," said Jim.

"Go 'long, now, Jim! yo're jist cracked over them, since the lady down there got you into the readin'-room and set ye up."

"Why shouldn't I spake good words of 'em, when I was a loafer widout a home or a friend till they took me in there, and I haven't lost a day's work since? Wait a bit until Jim Lahey has a house of his own, an' you'll see if he don't kape it neater and finer, not to say illeganter, for all the trouble the ladies have been at."

The boys cheered Jim softly, not forget-

ting the lady in the next room; but one and all felt sure that Jim's feet were on firm ground and his heart in the right place since he had been a constant visitor at the Home.

"Some of you might read here," said a gentle voice from the next room; "you might come for two hours on Sunday, and perhaps I could read to you a little."

"That's what I call handsome," said Jim; "but you must get tired of our noise on week-days, marm."

"Oh, no! I should miss you very much; and now, as the days grow longer, it will be pleasant to think of something besides cooking and food."

The Captain was not present when this offer was made; he had gone with Natty to see some machinery which the boy delighted in.

Jim Lahey told the Captain of it the next morning, and his only reply was a queer smile.

"What do you look that way for, sir? Isn't it just like the 'Princess' to do that?"

The boys had called her the "Princess" of late, ever since Brinley had told them of a story he been reading.

"I was thinking of another upper room," said the Captain quietly.

"What do you mean, sir? That we might get the other one, where the Donovans were, and make a hall like for Miss Mopsy?"

"The room I was thinking of was in another country, Jim, and a plain, despised, persecuted Man of Sorrows called people together there. I cannot help thinking that a little of his spirit *is* moving down here in Endicott Street."

Jim was silent. This strange, handsome man puzzled him, and his queer words always seemed to set his hearers to thinking.

"That's a grand idea of yours, Jim, about the room; we might manage it, perhaps.

I'll talk with the boys about it, and Mother Gaffney will be glad to have it taken off her hands."

Mother Gaffney was glad, and raised no objection to the door being cut through, after the Captain said it must be so and he would pay for it.

How eager the lads were to have a hand in it; how delighted with every improvement!

One thing cheered the invalid. Natty was interested, and seldom left the Captain's side when he was in the house.

"I should like to tell my mother about Natty," said Mopsy one day when the Captain had sent the boy after some nails; "I have never kept anything from mother, sir, and it does not make me feel happy."

"Since the trouble is well over, you might tell her," said the stranger. "I wish, however, that Natty would confess, himself."

Natty did not and would not; but Mopsy

found a good opportunity that evening to explain her mysterious absence during the past week.

"You cannot think how kind the Captain was, mother; he made it so easy for me, and I don't know what he said to Natty; but something has made a great change."

"He seems to be helping us all, dear. I wonder, sometimes, why he remains here; a gentleman would naturally seek a better boarding-place."

"And, mother, I do not think his name is Brown, for his handkerchief had another letter on it; I saw it when he was at work on your table."

"Never mind, dear; we will take the good which falls to us, and neither question nor surmise; he is certainly kind to us, and Mrs. Gaffney tells me that he pays the room-rent every week for the old man on the first floor, ever since he went in to see him the night after his fall."

"He must be a good man, mother; and if he helps us to keep Natty from going wrong, I am sure we shall never forget it. He never comes in here, does he, mother? Never has since that first day, not even to place the table. He always gives Jim the money for two. He sits next Jim, you know."

"He shows his delicacy," said her mother. "He knows that a lady would not mind these boys, whereas the presence of a strange gentleman might embarrass her."

On the following Saturday night the new room was opened. Much to the regret of all the boys the Captain was called away. Who his visitor was, or what his errand, none knew; but they were not forgotten.

At Mopsy's request, Jim Lahey took charge of affairs; and a merry evening was spent in singing, telling stories, reading aloud, and eating some ice-cream and cake, which arrived just in time, sent by "a

friend," the bearer said; and the "unknown friend" received three cheers.

It was nearly a week before the Captain returned, and took his accustomed seat at Mopsy's table. Some changes had taken place; two of the boys had found homes in the country, Mose had hired out for a fishing-trip, and Inky had work in a printing-office at Salem.

"I am afraid there will be more changes before the summer is over; and I dread to think of it, for the boys have fallen into our ways now, and it is so pleasant to see them in the new room. I think Spud is the happiest boy in Boston since Tishy's father has consented to let her remain with us."

Mopsy was talking to the Captain, who was a little late, and sat a long time over a cup of tea and some toast which Mopsy had made for him. She regarded him as an old friend now since the new room was complete. It seemed a long time since that day when he came in and took his

seat at her table. The trouble with Natty had made them friends, Mopsy thought; and, since then, he was always doing something to make life easier.

"It would do Spud good to get into the country this summer. Do you suppose he would leave Tishy for a few weeks?"

"He might leave her with us; he is so anxious to grow strong in order to support Tishy."

"And their father is back again, is he?"

"He came back from the Island, but has gone again. He brought us some of his wife's clothing to make over for the child, and we have not seen him since."

"Do you know anything of the mother?"

"We found some books and pictures of hers in the trunk, besides a large package of letters, which my mother says must be kept for the children to read; no one else must disturb them."

"Poor little things; the girl looks like an American."

"Her mother was a lady, sir, and has relatives in Boston, people of wealth, Spud says; but his mother would not apply to them, and they never liked the father."

The Captain was listening attentively.

"If the relatives could see little Tishy, they would be proud of her; she grows pretty every day; and is so fond of her dear Jamsie."

"Do you remember the mother's name? Did you ever hear it?"

"Oh, yes, often; Spud carries it in his breast-pocket, and it is marked on her clothing, 'Louisa Hunt.'"

The Captain started, his face flushed, the bit of toast which he was about to eat fell from his fingers. For a moment, he looked steadily in Mopsy's face.

"Perhaps you have heard it before, sir. I thought I had, but I cannot tell where. Mother thinks it is a fancy of mine."

"I have heard it before," he said briefly, as he wiped the moisture from his brow.

He did not offer to finish the broken toast, and soon rose to go out, while Mopsy looked at him earnestly.

"I hope you are not ill, sir," she said timidly.

"Oh, no, little friend!" and then he added something which Mopsy could not understand, about "the place of crucifixion."

"Spud was right; the 'tangles' were everywhere, and we were in them."

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE PUBLIC GARDEN.

WHEN the Captain left his little landlady, he went directly out of the house, and walked rapidly away. For once, he quite forgot to step into the old man's room on the lower floor, and speak a kindly word as he left him an evening paper. Up through the dismal, dirty streets he went, looking neither to the right nor left until he reached the Public Garden. The air had been sultry all day, and nearly every seat was filled. The winter had been severe, and now spring came in with a bound, and the sun beat down relentlessly on heads not quite prepared for the sudden change. Having finished his work for the day, Old Sol was now fast disappearing from sight, leaving only some brilliant

rays scattered here and there on the budding tree-tops.

The Captain saw it all, felt it, and was glad to know that hundreds of poor pent-up sons and daughters of poverty would once more be permitted to breathe the pure, free air. He said this to himself as he sank wearily down on the end of a seat already occupied. He was too much engaged with his own thoughts to notice his companion, until the latter said, —

"Warm weather for the season, sir?"

The Captain turned, and saw a fine-looking elderly gentleman with gray whiskers, cut in English style, and a good-natured face. He held an evening paper in his hand. Something about him seemed familiar.

"It is warm, sir," responded the Captain; "and I have foolishly walked faster than is necessary."

"We all do that in America, if we walk at all. I do not mind a mile or two on a night like this, and I am democratic

enough to enjoy the sights and scenes in these gardens."

"So am I, sir; they were the best bit of progress I observed after a long sojourn abroad."

How large a field for conversation is covered by that one word "abroad"! For half an hour these gentlemen chatted like old friends, of Italy, of Paris the gay, and Switzerland; then, as a handsome carriage drove up near the entrance, the elderly gentleman rose to go.

"I am glad to have met you, sir," he said, "and will be happy to see you at my office in Court Street. My home is in Brookline, but it is a fancy of mine to have Thomas meet me here with the horses. A man goes home with better grace after resting a bit in the fresh air; an idiosyncrasy of mine, for which I am well laughed at by my family."

The Captain rose and walked with his new friend to the carriage door.

"I indulge in a few idiosyncrasies of my own," said the Captain, smiling; "for instance, walking from the North End as if I were driven post-haste on a night like this."

"Ah, one of the visitors of the Associated Charities, I presume?"

"A self-appointed one at present, sir."

"Well, that reminds me of a queer thing which happened down there the other day. We found it out by accident. The nurse took my little grandchild down that way, expressly against orders; but the girl had a lover in that section, working in some of those lofts, and it seems the little one was left below with another giddy girl, who let it wander into the street, and it was nearly run over. A young girl of fourteen or fifteen rushed under the horse's head, seized the child, and landed it safely on the walk, and then hurried away. Now, I have been trying for a week to find out something about that girl. She saved my

only grandchild from death, and I want her to be suitably rewarded."

"She should be," said the Captain.

"Of course she should; but the queer part of it was, no one knew her, and she never stopped to speak to any one. We heard of it through the driver, who asked the child's name. The man used to work for me several years ago; and he came up to tell us, for fear the child might be taken there again."

"Your son's family live here in Boston, then?"

"Oh, yes; just over there on Beacon Street: you can almost see the house. I have not told my daughter-in-law yet, but I managed to have the girl discharged. You will see an advertisement of mine in this evening's paper; here it is."

The Captain took it, and bowed his thanks, while the elderly gentleman entered his carriage, and was driven rapidly away.

"A benevolent face and a genial man-

ner," said the Captain, as he returned to his seat once more. "Hardly a typical Bostonian, — too cordial, too frank, and perhaps too generous."

He turned over the paper, and found, under the head of special notices, the following: —

> **INFORMATION WANTED** — Concerning the little girl who saved a child from death on Tuesday, April —, by taking it from under some horses' feet near the corner of North Margin St. Any one who can bring reliable information will be suitably rewarded. JOHN B. HUNT, Court St.

Did the Captain see clearly?

Could it be true that he was sitting quietly on a seat in the Public Garden, or was the world upside down?

Mopsy had told him only the day before something about Spud and his tangles; surely they were surrounding him. What should he do, — fight out, like the fly Spud admired so much, or let things take their course?

Would a full knowledge of all particulars bring about the best results for all? Would further observation and delay end

in goodness, mercy, and peace, or must he remain at his post and await further developments?

It was a hard question, and Captain Brown pondered long ere he rose to retrace his steps.

"Why should I overturn good to the many for the sake of the few?" he asked himself. "Why should I interfere with the leaven which is working slowly but steadily?" He thought of Mopsy's mother, always serene, always hopeful, and yet never free from pain; he thought of Tishy, growing every day wiser and prettier under such tender, gentle guidance; he thought of Spud and Natty, and lastly of Mopsy, — brave, faithful Mopsy, now paring vegetables for her savory soup, now reciting her lesson at her mother's side.

He had not taken much interest in these lessons hitherto, he had been so absorbed with the boys; now, he asked himself, "If a golden opportunity comes to her, will it

be indeed golden? Can any one make her more noble and womanly, more patient and self-denying, than she now is? If a few words of mine can change her life, what can I give her for this work? Will the mother be happier? Will the world gain or lose? What of the boy and girl?

For some reason Captain Brown, as the lads called him, did not appear at breakfast; and when he came at night he told Mopsy he had been looking over some papers in a friend's office, and, as the clerk had returned to his place, he would no longer work at the Power House.

"You will not go away from here, will you?" asked Mopsy, with an unconscious tone of terror in her voice.

"Not if I may stay. I have some important papers to arrange; and if you will allow me I will write in our reading-room for a few weeks, paying you extra rent for its use."

"Oh, no, no!" said Mopsy. "It is all

yours now. We should never have had it but for you, and mother says there is so little we can do for you in return."

"Then it is settled; I will bring my desk here and begin work. Before I do so, I would like to have you and Natty go with me to call on a friend of mine. Will you?"

"I will ask mother, sir."

"Perhaps I had better ask for you?"

"If you will, sir."

He did not offer to enter the invalid's room, but stood without, leaning against the doorway, while Mrs. Howard's fingers were working nervously at the fringe of a shawl she wore. He did not even see her face.

He stood there, telling the story of the little child whose life was saved, and of the girl who saved it, while Mopsy listened, but did not seem to have heard it before.

"The little heroine was your daughter,

and the old gentleman is my friend. I have promised to take your daughter to him, and permit him to thank her as he pleases, if you do not object?"

Mrs. Howard did not object, but wished it looked upon as a simple duty simply done. "It must have been so with Netta; for I now hear of it for the first time."

"I had forgotten it, mother; I was so troubled about Natty, and I did not know where to go or what to do."

"You may go with the Captain, dear, and tell the gentleman that you neither expect nor desire a reward for your little act of mercy."

"We will go there to-morrow, as soon as Natty is out of school," said the Captain briefly.

Why Natty was invited Mrs. Howard could not understand; but doubtless it was only another effort of the Captain's to keep the boy under his control.

The Captain took his hat and went out.

"I shall not be recognized," said he, "thanks to an Indian sun and these broad shoulders; and selfish ease has a lesson to learn."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAWYER'S WIFE.

SCHOOL was out and Natty ready long before the Captain came. He "had been very busy," he said; "they must excuse his delay."

Mopsy looked uncommonly pretty in a neat little straw hat which her mother had trimmed for her; and the Captain wondered, as he walked by her side, if any one would ever imagine her to be a denizen of the North End.

Natty asked endless questions, "Where are we going? What for? Shall we stay long? Is it a friend of yours?"

The Captain answered him readily, and as they turned into Court Street he said, —

"Now, Natty, if you have questions to answer, give straightforward replies."

Mopsy was already dreading to enter, when her companion opened the door, and introduced her to the gentleman. The Captain was surprised to see a showily dressed woman seated by the gentleman's desk.

"Ah, here you are!" said the lawyer; "here you are! So this is the young lady who saved our little Bessie from being kicked to pieces. Come here and shake hands with my wife."

Mopsy moved forward, while the Captain looked keenly at the lady. Yes, he should know her anywhere, — the same coarse features, the same faded blue eyes and haughty expression. Years of wealth and luxury had not improved her, and the wrinkles about the eyes could not be concealed by the false hair which did excellent service in that way upon her brow.

She glanced at the Captain once, remembered him only as some one her hus-

band said was eccentric enough to visit poor families at the North End; then she examined Mopsy's face once more.

"She is older than I thought," said she; "a great girl like that might well lift such a frail thing as Bessie."

Her husband did not seem to hear her; he was looking at the child earnestly, and then suddenly roused himself. "She looks like a friend of mine," said he.

"A lady friend?" asked his wife.

"Yes; one long since dead."

"That's not comfortable. Do tell the child that we are grateful to her, and give her something for her trouble; this gentleman will see that it is wisely expended I dare say."

Captain Brown did not speak, and the lawyer thought he detected something like a look of scorn on his face. It vexed him for a moment; and he said with some show of spirit, —

"My dear, money can never repay this

little girl. I don't think she knows all she has done for us. Harry is quite wild over it, and as he is too sick to look after business I shall make it mine to act for both of us. What is your name, dear?"

"Netta Howard."

"They call her 'Mopsy' on account of her hair," said Natty, who had been longing to utter a few words.

"And what do they call you, my lad?"

"I'm her brother, and my name is Nathaniel Howard."

"A very good name it is, too."

"Now, I wonder what this young lady would like best in all the world?" asked Mr. Hunt kindly.

"To see mother well, sir," said Mopsy frankly.

"Is she an invalid?" asked the lawyer, turning to the Captain.

"I think she has not walked a step in many years."

"Why, how dreadful!" exclaimed the

lady; "and I dare say they are as poor as church mice. Such people always are."

Mopsy's cheeks burned like fire; and the Captain thought he detected a little tremulousness, which did not arise from fear, as she answered: —

"My mother says we can never be poor while we have power to help ourselves and others. We were not any happier when we were richer."

"There, there, mother; she is in the right of it. Let me manage this affair, for Harry's sake," said the lawyer.

"If mother can't be cured, what would you like? Don't be afraid to speak!"

"A nice chair for her to be moved about in."

"Anything else? If you had on a wishing-cap, and could get all you wished for, what would you say?"

"I had rather not tell all, sir."

"How would you like to have me send you to school every day?"

"I could not leave my mother, sir."

"Suppose we could put mother in the hospital, where she might have good care?"

Mopsy writhed like one in pain, and turned appealingly to the Captain.

"That would not be the kindest course under the circumstances, sir," said he. "Mrs. Howard is herself a fine scholar, if one can judge from the books about, and her daughter's line of studies. It would be impossible to separate them, as no one else understands the mother's needs. I think Miss Howard has shown herself quite capable of caring for her entire family. At present, she is in a locality where she is doing great good. Her chief desire, as I judge, is to supply her mother's needs, and give her brother a good education."

"I like that, young lady, and I will help you."

"How would you be pleased to have me send this brother of yours to a good

school in the country, where he can grow strong and wise too?"

Mopsy's eyes sparkled.

"It would be the next best thing to seeing mother well, sir."

"It shall be done, then; and your friend here may cousult with me as to the time and place, provided your mother does not object."

"I think it would be far wiser to bestow a certain sum on the girl, and let it end there," said the lawyer's wife; "but you have peculiar notions in such matters."

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders and opened a check-book, in which he wrote for a moment. One check he handed his wife, and the other he offered to Mopsy.

"There, my dear, you can go now and purchase the chair your mother needs."

"I cannot take your money, sir."

"Nonsense, child! I owe you ten times that amount. If little Bess had been killed that day, my only boy would have died too; he has been very ill."

"Yes, take it, little girl; my son would wish you to be paid. I dare say your mother will find some use for it," said the wife.

"My mother does not allow us to receive money from strangers," said Mopsy. "I only did my duty, sir, and this gentleman said you wished to see me. I did not think you would pay me for such a little thing; indeed, I cannot take your money."

The girl's flushed face turned eagerly to the Captain.

"Then I must confer with this gentleman, and see how I may be allowed to thank you; surely, I may send your brother to school?"

"If my mother does not object, sir. I want Natty to get out of the city in the hot weather, and it is not nice for him where we are."

"Very well; your friend may consult with your mother, and bring me word as to the result. Here, my lad, take this as

a little present from me; boys always know how to spend money."

Natty's hand was outstretched to receive the crisp bill, when Mopsy laid hers on his arm.

"No," she said sternly; "mother would be sorry. If he can work for you, sir, and do any errands for you, to earn it, we should be pleased."

The lawyer burst into a merry laugh. His wife muttered, "The proud little minx!" Captain Brown smiled. He was growing rather proud of Mopsy, and said mentally, "The child is more noble and womanly than my lady acquaintance. It is well that this woman does not know me."

After some pleasant chat on the part of the lawyer and his guests, Captain Brown went away with the children.

"Where are we going now?" asked Natty, as they turned into Washington Street.

"To look at the chair your sister has

"No!" She said, "Mother would be Sorry."

spoken of. I am in her debt for board and rent, and in time we may be able to secure one."

They entered a furniture establishment, and were ushered into a room where several varieties were seen.

"Mother might not be able to use it if she had it," said Mopsy.

"We will make provision for that."

When Mopsy had selected the style which her mother had often thought could be used, Captain Brown took the proprietor aside, and whispered a few words to him.

"All right," he said; "I will attend to it."

What the words were Mopsy could only guess, for the next day the chair arrived in Endicott Street, and was placed by her mother's bed. Two hours later some young surgeons came, friends of the Captain's, he said, and Mrs. Howard was gently raised into the luxurious cushions. It was a day

of rejoicing; but the experiment was new, and the surgeons were somewhat doubtful. Two days after, they repeated their visit, and this time the chair was gently rolled into the large room.

The boarders were wild with pleasure when they heard the good news; while Natty danced about like an Indian. The Captain was not there to join in the general rejoicing, but a small bunch of English violets stood on the invalid's table. When he came into the reading-room that night he told Natty that his legal friend would send him to a good school as soon as his mother saw fit to have him go.

"He's boss," said Natty; "but I hate her, — don't you?"

"Hardly," said the Captain. "We must not hate any one, least of all those who are related to us."

Natty stared. "Surely the Captain grows queerer every day," he said to Mopsy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MISSING LETTER.

"SOMETHING is on the poor man's mind," said Mrs. Gaffney to Mopsy one day, when the Captain left the table without tasting his food.

"He is tired out running hither and thither after Tishy's father," said Mopsy.

"More shame for that; an illegant gintleman like the Captain needn't be botherin' his head about such trash as the likes of him. Didn't I rint him the two rooms above onct, an' wasn't I glad to be rid of him, wid his lordly ways and his loud talk?"

"Was his wife nice, Mrs. Gaffney?"

"She was a fine lady as you'd wish to see, and he treated her like a brute, too. She was none of his sort at all, an' how

he got her for his wife none of us could make out; not even Biddy Brady, who can pump the priest himself, and he never know it."

"Spud told me something about her; she used to pray with them, and teach Spud to read."

"That she did, miss; she worked wid her two hands for 'em both the morning she died. It was consumption, you see; she was too pretty to die, if the saints will forgive me for sayin' it; and a pleasanter-spoken lady I never knew, save your own mother, miss. The ways of them two is something alike."

"Poor Spud! he loved her so much. But Tishy does not seem to mind; perhaps she did not take it all in, as Spud did," said Mopsy, with a glance at Tishy, who was playing with a kitten in the next room.

"You're right, miss. She was always with Spud. You see, the boy took the care, like, and his mother was talkin'

wid him often about what he should do. Once when she was took wid bleeding at the lungs, and I thought she might die, I made bold to ask her some questions, and she gave me some fine bits of rings to go sell for her. She was so proud, poor thing, she could not bear to owe a cint anywheres. I sold 'em for her; but I was looked at most suspicious like, as if I had been stealin' 'em. She was more comfortable after that; for the money lasted a good bit, and she made me keep it, and buy things, for fear he should get it and drink it up."

"Did she never tell you anything of her family; anything that might help the children, when she was gone?"

Mrs. Gaffney's tone changed.

"I've helped them the best I could. It was myself sent Spud here to you; and if she has rich folks belongin' to her, how can I tell where to find them?"

The woman's evident vexation surprised

Mopsy. Hitherto, Mrs. Gaffney had always been amiable and kind; now she turned impatiently away.

"I only thought," said Mopsy in an apologizing tone, "that she might have given you a letter to some one, telling them to look after her children; we hear of such things, sometimes."

"Who says there was a letter?" demanded Mrs. Gaffney in an angry tone. "There's some who knows more than the dead."

Seeing the girl's startled face, she added quickly, —

"Bless your heart, miss! if those children had rich friends to help 'em, and I *could* find 'em, wouldn't I do it? — wouldn't I have done it long ago?"

"I think you would," said Mopsy; "you have always been kind to me."

Mrs. Gaffney went away mollified; but in the next room a pale little woman pondered on these things while she watched Tishy at play.

As the warm days grew warmer the invalid brightened, and went day after day into the next room, enthroned in her chair.

One evening the Captain found her there as he came from the reading-room with some letters he had been writtng. It was impossible not to see her, as she sat looking out of the window directly opposite him, and he paused a moment to congratulate her on the improvement.

"I am gaining every day," she said, "and Netta is so happy to see me here that I am fully repaid for the effort required."

"Your physician tells me that you endure moving much better now; that the gain is slow, but sure."

"I wonder if he can be too sanguine?" said the invalid, as she looked wistfully from her window to the bit of sky just visible over the tall housetops.

"I think not; he is very cautious."

"Then I am indeed blessed, and my

dear children need not spend their days in this locality."

The Captain moved his lips as if about to speak; then he bit them suddenly, and went out, merely saying, "Good-evening."

"Brave little woman," he said, "and beautiful, too; a less gifted soul might have beaten itself to death against the bars of such a cage. Mopsy, or Netta as she always calls her, is like her, — quiet and resolute."

On the stairs he met Mopsy, with Tishy, Spud, and Natty. They had been for a walk and some books at the Public Library, — books carefully selected by Mrs. Howard.

The Captain paused a moment to chat with the children, and examine the titles of their new treasures.

"Good, every one," said he; "and your faces are rosy with the exercise you have taken."

"Spud is the only one who gets tired," said Tishy; "he had to rest."

The Captain looked at him earnestly. The little thin face was flushed, but the eyes were too brilliant for health, and somewhat sunken.

"Spud, my boy, we must get you into the country as soon as possible."

"Not without me!" exclaimed Tishy, with a vigorous pull, which nearly sent her brother backward on the stairs.

"We will attend to that later. Go into the reading-room, Spud, and let Miss Mopsy get you a glass of milk; here is some change for it. Natty, can't you run out for it?"

"Yes, sir; and be back in a jiffy."

The Captain turned back with the children; something in Jamsie's face drew him like a magnet.

As he entered the room where Mrs. Howard was sitting he remarked, —

"I met these little tramps coming in, and I have ordered Jamsie to lie down; he is not as rugged as the rest, and they have outwalked him."

"Poor boy," said Mrs. Howard; "I told him last week that he must leave his books and live out-of-doors."

Yes, Jamsie was tired; he admitted it at last, when he was on the reading-room lounge which the Captain had made. There were dark lines under his eyes, and a weary, worn look about the muscles of the mouth, which increased as he threw himself down. He rallied a little after he had taken the milk; but his thin hands trembled, and his voice was very weak.

The Captain sent the children away, and drew a chair near the boy.

"Does your head ache?"

"Sometimes, sir; but I am only tired."

"I see you are. You must remain here to-night. That wretched closet of yours is not fit for a dog. I did not mean you should stay there a day after I saw it."

"Father would be angry if he did not find me there."

"Have you seen him this week?"

"No, sir; I wish I knew where he was. I have looked for him, everywhere."

"Save your strength for something else, boy; but do not talk. I will read to you, after I have bathed your face and hands."

He took from his pocket a little vial, and poured part of its contents into a mug of water which stood near. Then with his own handkerchief he bathed the boy's brow and feverish hands.

"Close your eyes, Jamsie, and I'll whistle you to sleep, as my servant used to do in India. He was a queer fellow, half barbarian, and yet he could be very gentle. I was very sick once; so sick I was given up to die, and the last thing I heard when I went to sleep was his low, soft, musical whistle. Sometimes he used to keep time with his fan, sometimes he bathed me as I am bathing you now."

The boy looked up with a smile.

"It makes me think of my mother, sir."

"Not the whistling, Jamsie?"

"No, sir; the way you touch my head, and sometimes you speak like her when you are talking to the boys."

"If I should scold you now, and tell you to shut those tired eyes, would that be like her?"

"She never scolded us, sir, never; *he* does that."

"And beats you, too, sometimes, I am afraid, Jamsie?"

The boy nodded.

"Never mind, Jamsie; I am a kind fortune-teller. Suppose I tell you that those wretched days will soon be over; that never again will you be beaten or cold or hungry?"

"That would be heaven, sir. She used to talk with me about it. I wouldn't mind going now, if it wasn't for leaving Tishy."

The Captain bent low over the thin, pale face.

Did Spud, the poor and despised son of a wretched drunkard, dream that night, or

did he indeed hear the Captain say, "Dear boy, dear child, let me make it heaven for you here and now."

Jamsie did not know whether he dreamed, or even slept; but, ever after, he remembered a kiss which some one left on his tired brow; and yet, when he waked, the Captain sat far away, writing at the table, and the daylight was creeping in at the windows.

CHAPTER X.

A WEALTHY INVALID.

In a large house on Beacon Street a young man was resting on some pillows in a reclining-chair. He was evidently peevish and ill at ease, although surrounded with every luxury.

"Better try a glass of this cordial," said his wife, whose tone of voice indicated uneasiness, if not a slight impatience.

"I told you I was sick of it; why must I repeat it a dozen times?"

He did not wait for an answer to his question, but continued, —

"Father is late; he is late every day now."

"Perhaps he is going to New York tonight; you know he spoke of it."

"I don't want him to. Why can't he

send Barry? There is no use in having a confidential clerk if you can't trust him."

"Didn't your father say yesterday that Barry was sick with typhoid fever?"

"I don't believe it. He is as tough as an ox; it wouldn't pull him down much."

"Is he a married man?"

"Good heavens, Jennie! how should I know? A fellow cannot inquire into another man's domestic affairs."

"I knew he had been with your father since he was a boy. I thought he was fond of children, because he sent Bessie such a pretty Christmas gift."

"Policy, all policy; he knows the governor is pleased with any attention to her, and he does not lose anything by it."

The young woman was silent. She was contrasting mentally two men, — her husband and his father.

Just as she had decided for the thousandth time that Harry was exactly like his mother, and not in the least like the

father, she had learned to love and revere, she heard a step on the stairs, and rose to open the door.

"Here you are, pa," she said; "Harry has been fretting for you."

The old gentleman kissed her tenderly, and then approached his son.

"Well, boy, better I see; color good, eyes clearer, and altogether on the mend."

"I can't see it," said the young man. "I am tired of looking forever at the same things, and seeing the same faces; I want to get out."

"All in good time; all in good time. Let me see; if you can stand a drive out home on Thursday, you are to go, and mother will nurse you up for a while. Poor Jennie needs rest."

"She does not do anything; the nurse does everything for me."

The old gentleman nodded pleasantly to his daughter-in-law.

"Now, I think she does a great deal,"

said he; "only think of it, shut up here for nearly three months with you, and not one lunch party in all that time. It's rather hard on Jennie, when she and I enjoy our freedom and lunch parties especially."

"She can go if she likes."

"Tut, tut! don't talk nonsense, boy; but let me tell you some good news. I have a new clerk in your place; a treasure, too. Found him by accident. He was the one who brought Bessie's little protector to see me,—a born gentleman. I was telling him my unfortunate position the other day, with you laid up, and Barry on the sick-list, and he said, 'If I can serve you any by giving you a few hours every day for a week or two I will do so, as I am quite idle just now while waiting for some private business to be settled.' I jumped at the offer at once."

"Better look out; you know nothing about him."

"Nonsense, boy! I tell you he is a gentleman. I knew I had seen him some-

where before, so I questioned him, and he said, 'Oh, yes; he met me a number of years ago when quite young. Didn't I remember him at the party given by Judge Oldson? I never forget a face, you know; so we get on famously together. He accomplishes a tremendous amount of work, and seems to know by instinct the very thing I want."

"Can't you send him to New York?"

"I hadn't thought of it; in fact, coming as he does, I do not like to impose on good-nature."

"I wish you would. It's infernally dull here any way; and how I am to get on without you, I don't see."

"Then I'll speak to Brown about it; he could do the business just as well, and I don't want to leave you, if you feel that way."

"That's clever; you never did refuse me anything, did you? You won't be sorry for it some day, if I am worthless. I feel about played out."

"Don't talk that way, boy; don't. Why, we will have you up to the mountains soon, and you'll come home just as you have done before, quite made over."

"You were right, father, and she was wrong; mother meant all right, but a diet of pies, candy, nuts, and evening parties will not answer for a growing boy. Why didn't you put your foot down and send me off to school, where I should have taken knocks, and given them?"

"I couldn't make your mother unhappy, boy; I had promised to do the other thing, and I did not understand some things as well as I do now."

"There's one thing I want done when I get through with all this fret and worry, and that is to have Bessie brought up in simple, homely fashion. Let her live out in the air, romp, play, and have only the simplest food. I have thought about it very often since I have been lying here. If I had been trained differently, I should

be a better man now, and not a fretful invalid."

The father was much moved, but could only say, —

"If there is anything I can do to make you happier in any way, Harry, it shall be done; you have only to ask me, boy."

"I know it, father, and I have been thinking of all your goodness; but you cannot straighten the snarls. It has been a mistake, all through."

"There is the nurse coming in with Bessie," said the young wife; "I will go and see to her."

"We won't repeat the blunders with Bessie; this generation has a better chance," said the judge cheerily.

"What can we do? Jennie's aunt is determined to control her and our child. Even to-day, after all my remonstrances, the little thing was loaded down with velvet and lace, and sent out for show. My mother spoiled me by over-indulgence in eating, and want

of suitable exercise; now, aunt comes in and insists that Bessie must be dressed like a doll, taught like a parrot, and sent out daily on parade. If my ideas are carried out, I must contend with wife and aunt, I suppose."

"Could you go away for a few months with me, Harry, and let Jennie take a journey; she needs brightening up?"

"Aunt would claim mother and child."

"No; let us take Bessie with us. Your invalid condition warrants that indulgence."

"Where could we go?"

"I don't know; we can find a place. Your mother will join Jennie and her aunt, and we will take the little girl and nurse to some simple country home, where she will have a fair chance to grow for a few months at least."

"And after that, father?"

"'Wait and see,' as Brown says. We only live a day at a time. You must know Brown; he has travelled everywhere, knows

everybody, and is a perfect philosopher. I'll ask him about a place; he told me yesterday that he was arranging a little rest for an invalid friend."

"Better talk with Jennie about our plan, father; I am sorry for the poor girl. She has a hard time of it trying to serve two masters; and she is very fond of Bessie in her way, although she is quite willing to go to Europe with her aunt, and leave her to the care of hirelings."

"We must make due allowance for a girl brought up as she was," said his father.

"Do you remember Isa, father?"

"Every day — almost every hour."

"Could any training have made her selfish?"

"Poor girl! poor pet! she was as dear to me as you are, Harry."

"Father, some time before I die I want you to tell me why you sent her away."

"I — sent — her — away? Are you dreaming?"

"No, sir; my mother told me so! For my good, she said."

"I sent her away — my pretty Isa, as dear to me as an own daughter? Why, boy, I have spent money freely to find her, and at last heard she was dead. I loved that girl — loved her as my own."

"So did I, father?"

"You, Harry? As a sister, boy?"

"As the dearest woman on earth. I was never reckless until then. Do you remember, father?"

The son leaned wearily on his pillows, and his large dark eyes were full of tears.

The father arose, and laid his hand on the head of his invalid son.

"There, Harry!" he said; "you have talked too much, and I am dazed and tired. I will run in again to-day."

CHAPTER XI.

THE CRISIS.

THE wealthy lawyer left his son's house in a perturbed state of mind. Either he had been terribly deceived or his brain was disordered.

"Blind, stupid fool that I am!" he exclaimed. "Why have I let misery reign where all should be happiness? Here am I ranked as a lawyer of ability, and yet events transpire in my own household which an ordinary police officer would manage better. I will not go home just now. I have always maintained that a man should carry a pleasant face and leave cares behind him when he enters his own door, and I am unsettled now. I will send word that I am detained."

His first impulse was to go at once to

his wife, and learn from her how much she knew of the past; but reflection taught him that her statement to his son would not make her testimony valuable.

"I will go to the office again, and find Brown. Perhaps he will tell me something suitable for Harry; and the boy must be taken away. A heartache with all the rest of it, poor boy! No wonder he got into all sorts of scrapes; no wonder he refused to take me into his confidence."

On his way to Court Street, the lawyer met an old client who was in great trouble and required his counsel.

"I am a little upset myself just now," said he; "but come into the office and talk it over."

"Is Harry worse?"

"Not exactly; and yet he is so disheartened, and has been talking of death. It makes me wretched to see the boy so."

"Why don't you send him to Europe?"

"Been once; it did not help him. Money

is poor trash when you see your only child going away from you, and find yourself helpless."

"Your money furnishes him with every luxury, Judge; and when you have seen people dying without even the necessaries of life, as I often do, you will thank Heaven for its kindness to you."

"I know; I know. But here we are; come in and let us talk it over.

"Has Mr. Brown gone, Upton?" he asked of a young man in the outer office.

"Yes, sir; went about an hour since."

"Will he come back?"

"I think not, sir; he carried some papers with him."

"Too bad; I wanted you to meet Brown. He is one of the men you like to sit down with now and then for a genuine intellectual feast. Oh, here is a note from him!"

"If I am not in early to-morrow you will know that I am nursing a little motherless lad who needs me. In order to further your work I will finish the papers

you were anxious to have done, while watching with the child to-night. Will return them early in the morning by special messenger."

"Just like him; he never spares himself," said the lawyer. "I wish I knew what sort of a place he creeps into down there, and I would hunt him up; but let us hear your worries now."

It was quite late when the story was told and the needed assistance given, after which both men went to their homes, neither light of heart nor cheerful, despite position, wealth, and fame.

While they are trying to sleep, let us look once more into the little reading-room, which is now painfully silent.

The boys are no longer there, making merry with books and games; but, prostrate on the bed-lounge, is little Spud, or Jamsie as the Captain calls him.

The child is very ill; his breathing shows it, and the presence of a physician confirms it. The Captain is watching anxiously,

while the child's restless fingers pick and pull at the sheet above him.

"He talks more than usual to-night," said the doctor.

"Yes; I left him a little while to-day, and a good-natured woman here in the house tried to act as nurse while Miss Howard was busy. I cannot find out exactly what happened, but her presence had something to do with this mental disturbance."

"Does Miss Howard know?" asked the doctor.

"I questioned her, and she tells me that she knew nothing of it until she heard Mrs. Gaffney calling him a dear, dying lamb, that couldn't speak to forgive her."

"And the woman?"

"There I am puzzled again; she refuses to say anything, save that she was overcome like, and cried a bit, seeing him here so like his mother."

"This must not occur again," said the

doctor. "He seems to know you and cling to you. Can you manage to stay with him constantly for two or three days, until the crisis is past?"

"His care is my first duty now," said the Captain, as he gently stroked the boy's brown hair.

"I want the letter, mamma, mamma! Oh, where is it? Don't hurt her, Tishy. Captain, O Captain," murmured the unconscious sufferer.

"Better speak to him; your voice controls him," said the doctor.

"I am here, Jamsie, close by, and all is well."

"Captain, dear Captain, don't let Mrs. Gaffney take me — father, don't strike me again, don't — oh, my head! — where's Tishy? I can't get the whiskey, father; don't beat me! O mother, mother! the letter, the letter!"

Thus the poor little sufferer raved for long, weary hours. About daybreak he

fell into a stupor, and the thin lips grew whiter and whiter.

"I have done wrong," said the Captain, as he bent over to moisten his brow. "I should have taken him away at once, and now I am punished."

"I do not agree with you," said the doctor; "if ever a man has fought to right the evil done by others you have. I am sometimes tempted to expose your secret, and let you receive the reward."

"You could not do that, Rob. We were boys together, and you gave your promise; as a man of honor, you must keep it until I see my way clear."

"Never fear, old boy; I should not be sharing this vigil with you if I did not honor you above any friend in the world, save my mother. I have longed to tell her; she could do so much to help you, and give you a bit of comfort besides."

"All a tangle, a tangle," murmured the sick boy.

"Poor little Spud! It has been a cruel tangle for you," said the Captain; "but, please God, there shall be a bit of the kingdom of heaven and peace to your tired little feet."

"What do you intend to do with your wards?" asked the doctor.

"Wait until the legal questions are settled and this poor child can be moved. Then I will show you."

"Then will you allow me to introduce my mother to my old chum?"

"Provided he is discreet."

"Thank you. Let me show you that I am. You have not slept for three nights; go and rest now, while I watch my patient until Miss Howard is astir."

"I could not sleep, Doctor, until the crisis is past."

"You cannot alter the decree."

"No; but I am at hand if he calls. Think of it, Doctor, dying, perhaps, without one friend near, one parting word if she"—

"Hush, Jack! don't think of it. You could not help it, and you are brooding over it until your hair is growing white."

"Oh, no, I do not brood; it has passed for her, and I must have the bitter knowledge."

"Those who caused her to suffer should bear the bitterness alone, and yet you would reward good for evil."

"She would wish it."

"Is the boy very like her, Jack?"

"The girl is more so in looks, but less in temperament."

"She must have been quite young, Jack."

"Yes, in years; but in sorrow, misery, wretchedness, abuse, and suffering — think of it! Think of her calls for me unanswered, her cries unheeded!"

"I beg you not to think of it! You must get out of this atmosphere at once. Your search is ended; now rest content. If you dwell on her wrongs continually you will unfit yourself for the care of these

little folks who need you so much. I should demand justice, take the property due, and put myself far from them all."

"Two things deter me, Doctor."

"What, pray?"

"The helpless woman in the next room, and the man who was kind to me in my boyhood. I blamed him once, but not now. One end of the tangle is in my hand; and I know that he has suffered, is suffering even now. With all his wealth, all his fame, and with hosts of friends, he yet carries a sore heart, if I read correctly; and for his sake and for hers, I must wait and be patient."

"And bury yourself in the slums meanwhile."

"Oh, no! Remember your own poet's words:—

> "'For God, who loveth all His works,
> Has left His Hope with all.'"

CHAPTER XII.

"LIKE THAT OF THE DEAD."

"LOOK out for your young nurse, Captain," said the doctor one morning; "she is looking fagged and weary."

"I spoke of it yesterday. Her mother thinks it the result of her anxiety concerning Jamsie; she is very fond of him, and would nurse him, but I shall forbid it henceforth."

"How old is she?"

"Fifteen, yesterday. The boys intended to make it a grand festival, but this sickness upset their plans."

"She looks like a girl of eighteen when she is sitting quietly; she has a very mature face."

"And a mature mind as well. Poor girl! her life is a history, marvellous and yet true."

"They seem to be people of refinement. I am always struck with the elegant manner of the mother."

"You were surprised to find such a woman in such a place as this?"

"Well, no; nothing surprises me, nowadays. When I am wealthy I shall write a dozen novels, every one solid truth; and the dear reading public will say, 'How sensational!' Tell me Mrs. Howard's history, and I will give you half the profits of each book."

"A reward which will not expand my treasury unless you find some publisher who does not claim five-sixths of the profits."

"Well, let us have the story."

"I am not sure that I know it myself; I am unwinding one of poor Jamsie's 'tangles.'"

"What a genius for mysteries you possess. Well, promise me this, — if the princess proves to be a real princess, and

the daughter of a wealthy heiress, promise, on your honor, to remind her of the days when I, a poor pill pedler, served her to the best of my ability. Let me at least have a share of the spoils" —

The Captain smiled.

"There," exclaimed the doctor suddenly, "that is the first smile I have seen on your face for weeks! Really, my friend, you will soon become famous as the man who never laughs."

"The old spirit is not dead, believe me; when one tangle is successfully unwound you will find me a very boy at heart."

"Good! and may I be there to see; meantime, look after the daughter of the princess. She needs something outside of this worry and work, or I shall have another patient."

"I will act at once," said the Captain, as his friend went out from the sick-room.

Half an hour later, the Captain was seen conversing with Mrs. Gaffney on the lower

floor; and before night, with Mrs. Howard's full consent, a stout, capable woman was installed in the room as cook, dish-washer, and general worker, under Mopsy's direction.

"I do not feel tired," said the girl, when told of the new plan; "now that poor Spud knows me, and takes a little food, I feel much better."

Nevertheless, she was seen to pause twice on the stairs to rest that day, and the next morning the doctor took her with him for a drive to Cambridge, where he had a patient to visit.

"If you would let me help a little, I should feel more comfortable," said Mrs. Howard, as the Captain passed through the room to prepare some ice for his patient.

"What would you like to do?" he asked.

"I might have my chair rolled into the next room, and take your place for an hour or two each day."

"Would it not weary you to moisten the boy's lips and soothe him when he is restless?"

"Not more than it would weary me to see you and Netta constantly at work, and as you have supplied help in the cooking department I shall have more leisure."

"Suppose I tax you to-day? I wish to see my legal friend for an hour or two on important business, and Jamsie is sleeping. Could you sit there, do you think?"

"I am sure of it, and it would rest me to see his poor little face once more."

"Very well; we will arrange it."

He cracked the ice with his own hands, and drew the little table near Jamsie's bed. On this, he placed the medicine and cooling drinks; also a little bell; then, with an almost reverent touch, he slowly guided the invalid's chair over the portal, and rolled it close to the boy.

He did not realize that she had not seen him before. He was not conscious of the

shock she would receive when she saw his wasted frame. Her eyes were closed as they always were when she was moved, in order to avoid an unpleasant sensation which she could not now control.

"Tell me if I am not moving you properly," said the Captain; "I am a novice, you know, and my friend, the doctor, is an expert."

"Quite right," she answered feebly; for as yet all motion was agony.

"There you are," he said, "at last; and now you can touch Jamsie's hand readily."

He looked in her face to read her pleasure, but saw it white as marble.

"I have been too harsh," he thought; "I feared it; but some wine will refresh her."

He poured it into a dainty glass which he had near for Jamsie, and held it to her lips.

She drank it with difficulty, and tried to thank him.

"Pardon me," he said; "I thought I

was a careful nurse, but I have hurt you cruelly. Henceforth, we will wait for our physician."

"It was not that," she said; "I saw the boy's face, and it was so like that of the dead."

"Ah, he is mending now; two days ago he was, indeed, like one dead. Now we feed him often, and he knows us."

As he spoke, the boy opened his eyes, and the Captain moistened his lips.

"He has slept a trifle too long for one so weak."

"Captain," said the boy feebly.

"Yes, Jamsie."

"Where is Tishy?"

"Gone into the country with a friend of mine. Natty is with her."

He closed his eyes again, but soon opened them to say, —

"Mamma, are you there?"

Mrs. Howard had taken his hand in hers.

Neither of the watchers could answer his question. He moved his eyes feebly about; he saw the invalid in her chair, her sweet, expressive face touched with tenderness.

"The princess," he said with a faint smile.

"Yes, Jamsie; she is your nurse now," said the Captain.

While he was still conscious, Mopsy came in and stood beside him. The fresh air had given her unusual color, and her beautiful hair had half escaped from the simple net in which she wore it.

"Like a painting," said Jamsie, as he closed his eyes once more.

"He is still delirious," said Mopsy anxiously.

The Captain turned to look at her.

"No," said he gravely, "he is quite sane; and if you will take my place I will go now and attend to the business I spoke of to your mother."

"How delightful it is to see you here,

mamma," said Netta, as soon as they were alone; "did the doctor advise it?"

"No, the Captain permitted it; I was anxious to do something for our poor boy."

"And now you can come every day, mamma; and you need not help me with those horrid potatoes, nor do any more dirty work with your pretty hands. The woman is doing everything so well; and she says she loves to do for us."

"Why for us, Netta?"

"Don't you know? She is Inky's mother. She has been at the Industrial Home, and knows how to do things properly. The Captain told Mrs. Gaffney that we must have some experienced person, and she sent him down there. Now, mamma, we can get another half-hour to read every day."

"But we must not talk in this room, daughter; our little friend needs perfect quiet."

"Where has the Captain gone, mamma?"

"To consult with his legal friend, he said; his business must have suffered since Jamsie's illness."

"What a busy man he is! He writes such quantities of letters, and many of them are foreign ones. Perhaps he has a family abroad, and makes himself happy while they are gone, by working for others. Is not he good, mamma?"

"Very good to us all, dear."

"The doctor says he is one of the noblest men he ever knew, and he has seen great sorrows for one so young."

"I thought so," said Mrs. Howard quietly.

CHAPTER XIII.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

"THEN you do not like my plan?" said the lawyer, after he had spent an hour in his private room with our friend the Captain.

"I should like to consider it more fully; it would be almost impossible to decide, without seeing the parties."

"The very thing I want you to do; it would cheer my boy up, immensely. Will you come with me for a call on the poor fellow? He has club friends, and all that sort of thing; but he needs some wise, judicious friend to rouse him; he is morbid, nervous, fanciful."

The Captain hesitated.

"I know I am very selfish in this matter, but you are too young to understand it.

You see, the poor boy was thwarted in his love affairs, — not my fault, Heaven knows, — and — well, in fact, he is anything but happy, although he has a dear little wife, who is devoted to him, and, I think, really loves him. Her aunt made the match, with some assistance from his mother, and everything seemed all right until lately. It would be a comfort to me if you would call."

"That settles it, then," said the Captain. "I will go with you to-morrow."

"Thank you, Brown; I can't tell why it is, but you were sent here just at the right time. There are moments when a man feels as if the earth were sinking from under his feet, and there were nothing for him to catch hold of. That has been my case ever since Harry told me how he felt; and if I thought I could make him happier, I would throw up my private business and go to the ends of the earth with him. I should like to feel that I had suc-

ceeded in making one person happy in this world."

"You have not many relatives, then?"

"Nearly all gone, Brown. I had two children in my family, at one time, as dear to me as Harry; but they have gone too."

The Captain rose to leave.

"I will join you to-morrow, sir, and call on your son; and if I can serve you in any way, command me. It is not pleasant to feel that one's dearest friends are slipping away beyond our recall."

"Pleasant? Why, man, I have sometimes felt like one standing alone in a graveyard; and yet the world counts me a happy and fortunate fellow."

"The world can detect gray hairs, but cannot see the scars on human hearts," said the Captain.

"You are too young to know it, my friend; but, Heaven bless you, I feel better now for this chat. I am to speak at a big dinner to-night, and not a soul

will dream that I know either sorrow or care."

They bade each other good-by like old and dear friends, with a warm hand-grasp; then the Captain went his way, once more, to the sick-room.

Jamsie was mending, so slowly that the watchers scarcely dared hope; and yet he gained. He roused a little one day when they told him Tishy was happy in her country home, that she sang like a bird, and was saving endless treasures, even to bits of cake, for dear Jamsie. So Natty wrote, and Natty's letters were curios.

"Shall I ever go?" Jamsie asked.

"When I can bundle you up like a mummy," was the Captain's reply.

"It is too warm for that."

"Not when you are transporting bones," said the Captain, smiling.

The next day, both gentlemen were seated in Harry Hunt's beautiful room, where the invalid endeavored to appear cheerful.

"How would it please you to have some one come in and read to you for an hour every day?" asked the Captain, after they had discussed various topics.

"Immensely, if he could read well and found the right sort of literature — not too simple or profound."

"A little friend of mine is a beautiful reader; she has had good experience in reading aloud to an invalid mother."

"I wish I were, for Harry's sake," said the young wife; "but I think it is a special gift. It tires us both when I read aloud."

Her frank, unostentatious manner pleased the Captain.

"It is, as you say, a special gift, and my little friend certainly is endowed with it. I think you would like her."

"Is she neat and refined?" asked the sick man. "I am horribly sensitive. If her fingernails were not well kept, I should not hear a word of the book."

"She is very neat; a little lady, in fact. Your father has seen her."

"Where, Brown?"

"She called at your office with me."

"Not the pretty girl who saved our Bessie?"

"The very same."

"By Jove, Harry! we must have her; she is quite a beauty, and proud too."

"A North End beauty," said the sick man with a half-sneer. "However, I owe her more than I can well pay, and if she chooses to try, well and good."

"I will request her to come, on one condition," said the Captain.

"Name it."

"That not one word is said to her relative to the rescue of your child; she dislikes to hear it mentioned."

"Most people would parade it."

"Miss Howard is a lady by birth, and should be treated as such, although she is but fifteen," said the Captain with dignity.

"Don't mind Harry; he is a trifle touchy since his sickness. The young lady will win them all in an hour's time; and I should like to have our little Bess know her preserver."

"She will insist on knowing her when she is older, if she is like her mother," said Mrs. Hunt.

"Don't be sentimental, Jennie," said her husband.

"I should like to be grateful," was the quiet reply.

"You see how it is," said the lawyer, when the gentlemen were once more in the street. "They do not understand each other. Now, I am very fond of Jennie. Her aunt is a cold-blooded, exacting, ambitious woman. She has done her best to spoil the girl, and the poor thing has a hard time of it, among them all. You know now why I wanted to get the boy away from them and give him a chance."

"To separate them now, even for a season, would increase the difficulty."

"What would you recommend?"

"That the aunt be induced to go elsewhere, and our young friends put in a position where your son must see the best side of his wife's character. A great many men need an introduction to their own wives."

"You talk like a man of fifty."

"I have been a keen observer, sir."

"How would you bring about this result?"

"I would first, as I said, dispose of the aunt in the kindliest manner possible. I would then rent for the summer a neat little cottage among the hills, where only one servant would be required. This would give your daughter new duties and experiences; your son would have something to divert him in caring for his child."

The lawyer pondered a moment.

"I think I see a way out," he said at last. "Mrs. Craft, the aunt, is spending a few days with my wife; and, only yesterday, both ladies said they would go abroad this summer, were it not for poor Harry. I will get

the doctor to order the thing you prescribe for the boy, and send the ladies to Europe."

"Very well; when you have done so, I will secure a nest for you; I know the very spot, all furnished ready to step into, and close by one I have control of. Meantime, Miss Howard will act as reader for a few days."

"I won't try to thank you, Brown. You know how I feel in this matter. I shouldn't mind claiming you for a son myself. At all events, I can envy your father."

"I have neither father nor mother, sir."

"The deuce take my blundering! Well, Brown, you have proved a good angel to me and mine."

"Thank you, sir," said the Captain, as he walked away, saying softly to himself, "He who saves a soul has saved his own."

CHAPTER XIV.

BEACON STREET AND THE NORTH END.

When Mopsy first heard the proposal that she should read daily to a sick gentleman, she hesitated, and secretly wished she might spend every moment with her mother and little Spud.

The girl had grown wonderfully light of heart since her mother's improvement and Natty's removal; her cares seemed so much lighter, even with Spud lying there pale and helpless. It was such a comfort to have some one to scrub and clean, some one to make the huge loaves of bread which must be made every day.

Mopsy had not known rest nor quiet since that terrible accident, and she smiled now as she thought of quiet in connection with her small army of boarders. Some

of the boys had followed the example of Mose and Inky, and found work outside of the city; but a number of young men came now regularly for dinner, thus increasing work as well as the income from work.

The days were so long now, that Mopsy did not mind rising earlier; and, under her mother's systematic direction, all worked well, with plenty of time for reading and for the lessons which were so dear to the girl.

The Captain had mentioned the subject of reading to Mrs. Howard while her daughter was out; and the good lady saw at once three things to be gained, — a desirable change for Netta, an opportunity to acquire confidence in herself, which she greatly lacked, and the benefit to a suffering man. The pecuniary benefit did not occur to her until the Captain mentioned it.

"I am afraid that I am not mercenary," said she with a little laugh. "You see, I

never admit for one moment that we are poor; and, since Netta's successful business venture, we really need so few things."

"I discovered long since that money value stood for less with you than with most people. The family can well afford to pay a fair price, and Miss Howard will earn it. The gentleman is peevish, exacting, and may possibly annoy her; but his physical condition must excuse it. If your daughter can tolerate him, I know she will do him good, and in a few weeks the poor fellow may be able to get into the country."

Mopsy came in while they were talking, and was duly informed concerning the new plan.

"I am afraid I could not read before a strange gentleman," said she.

The Captain smiled.

"I mean," said the girl, blushing, "that it would be hard to do so in a strange place; here, for you and mother and little Spud, one does not mind."

"Thank you; and just these readings convinced me that you could do a great kindness to a poor suffering man and a very tired lady, by doing, for one hour every day, exactly the thing you do so well here for several hours without any apparent fatigue."

"Oh, I love to read."

"Exactly, and my poor friend will doubtless enjoy hearing you."

"Then, if mamma approves, I will go."

Mamma did approve, and the next morning Mopsy finished her home duties and went away with the Captain, who only remained long enough to put into her hands a small volume, and then bade her good-by.

It was quite a successful reading, although Mopsy felt uncomfortable under the sick man's steady gaze.

The Captain had selected for the first day a lively, absurd story, which must hold the hearers' attention, and also display the

reader's powers. He had heard Mopsy read it aloud to the boys one evening, and he knew her familiarity with it would lead her to forget herself.

Mrs. Hunt sat nearly behind her husband's chair, where she might watch his face without being seen; and as the reading went on she saw that the discontented expression was fast leaving his face.

"What a blessing it will be," she said, mentally, "if this continues to please him!"

The hour was up, and Mopsy prepared to close her book after one glance at the handsome clock on the mantel.

"Don't go yet," said the sick man; "why, you haven't fairly got under way."

"I must not tire you, sir; but, if it really rests you, I will stay longer tomorrow."

"Yes; your voice is very pleasant — a million times better than some of the people who set themselves up for professionals. You must have had fine training."

"Only my mother, sir."

"Only! By Jove! when a mother can teach her own children, college professors may stand aside. Jennie, can't you order some lunch for Miss Howard?"

"With pleasure, dear."

But Miss Howard would not remain. She did, however, consent to accept the dainty basket of fruit which Mrs. Hunt sent her mother, with her thanks.

"For you see, dear," she said, "I am greatly indebted to her for letting you come. My poor husband often grows so despondent that we do not know what to do for him; and you have really brightened him up."

"I am very glad," said Mopsy with genuine feeling; "it is such a comfort to do anything for a sick person."

Mrs. Hunt herself waited upon Mopsy to the door, and there kissed her good-by.

"Poor woman," said Mopsy, "she kissed me as if she really cared for me, just be-

cause I gave her sick husband a little pleasure."

Mopsy did not know that the little child whose life she had saved was even then playing in the room above, nor did she know that Mr. Hunt, leaning wearily on his pillows, said to his wife that very day, —

"Jennie, I wish you would help me think of something sensible and practical to do for that young girl. It is a swindling shame for such a pretty creature to live at the North End."

"We might take her into our own family," said the wife.

"That is just like your womanish reasoning. Hasn't she an invalid mother? I tell you it makes a man feel uncomfortable to think of a delicate, pretty girl in that sort of place. Why, our own child might be reduced to some such strait if anything should happen to us."

"Oh, don't, Harry! You fairly make me shudder."

"If our fortune or my father's should take wings, or your stocks should depreciate, where should we be, I should like to know?"

"Don't distress yourself with such fancies, dear," said his wife, tenderly stroking his hair.

"Please stop that; I have told you a thousand times that it makes me nervous to have you touch my head."

"I beg your pardon, dear; it always rests me."

There was the faintest echo of a sigh following these words; but the little woman had made up her mind, long since, to do everything for him — everything, and bear all things patiently; then, there would be nothing to regret if the worst came. How many times she had left that chamber to sink upon her knees in the next room and weep bitterly while she prayed, only the recording angel knew.

"Auntie must never know," she said to herself; "dear, patient, generous Father

Hunt must not even guess, and I must bear it alone, — all the sneers, taunts, impatience, rudeness. Harry did not mean it, of course; he was sick, poor fellow, and then his mother has made him selfish. What could one expect of an only child, indulged and humored to the last degree? I must guard against it with Bessie. As soon as Harry is better I will invite other children to pass some time with her every day; and I will teach her to think of others. I will ask Miss Howard about her mother; perhaps she can tell me something. All my life long I have lived in Boston, and heard of the want, suffering, sin, and misery at the North End, and yet I never saw it."

"Harry," said the wife, after a few moments' silence, "do you think it would be proper for me to call on Miss Howard's mother?"

"Good heavens, Jennie! what new freak has taken you? No; Miss Howard's mother would probably be offended, and there's no

telling what shocking diseases you might contract. Fancy you down there, with your carriage and diamonds! You are foolishly absurd!"

"Perhaps so," was the brief reply.

CHAPTER XV.

HEARTS AND DIAMONDS.

JUDGE HUNT and his son were lunching together in cosey fashion. Mrs. Hunt had prepared the repast with her own hands, and then stolen away. No one knew better how to arrange dainty dishes in a tempting array, or to prepare nice tidbits for a capricious appetite; but three months is a long time, and the finest *chef* in the world must sometimes repeat an order.

"I wish you would come up to lunch to-morrow," she had said on Sunday, as her father-in-law left the house. "Come in and surprise Harry; it will brighten him up, and he will not have time to find fault with his food."

"I shall certainly come, my dear," replied the lawyer; "and I want to say,

here and now, that you have shown wonderful tact and skill since my boy has been down. I shall never forget it, little woman, never."

"O father, do you really think so?" she asked, with large tears in her tired eyes. "I sometimes despair. You see, nothing is ever quite right; sometimes, he seems to detest my very presence, and"—

"Poor child, poor little girl! Yes, yes, I know; a woman needs the meekness of a dove and the patience of an angel to get on with the best man that ever lived. We are cranky animals, dear, and abominably rude to those we love best. Don't mind, Pussy, don't mind; but tell me, what is it about your wanting to go to Europe and leave Bessie?"

"I, father?"

"Yes; Harry told me."

"Oh, auntie and he had not been good friends for a day or two, and he said he wished he could have Bessie all to him-

self, and go away somewhere where he could train her to be a decent woman."

"And Bessie's mother?"

"I said if I thought he would be happier, I would go to Europe or somewhere; and I would, father, only I don't think I *could* live long without my baby."

"Of course you couldn't. See here, Pussy, I have a little plan partly laid out for you and Harry. Brown proposed it; and he has a genius for making every one happy. Don't breathe a word of it, not even to your aunt, and we shall see what we shall see. Good-by, Pussy; I want to see your face as plump and rosy as it used to be."

"Harry says I have faded, horribly, and I suppose I have," said the little wife with a faint smile.

"Confound his impudence, if he is my boy!" said the old lawyer. "I tell you what it is, Jennie, I should like to have some new statute which should punish

every man who resorted to negative abuse of the woman he has promised to love and cherish. Why, women die every year from it! and if one of them does not chance to have her throat cut or a bullet in her brain, they call it a disease. I tell you, little girl, there are things which stab one to the heart besides knives, more's the pity."

The young wife was sitting beside him with her hand in his. As he spoke she withdrew it and touched his cheek caressingly, saying, —

"Dear father, how well you know! I thought only women knew."

He drew her gently to him, and laid her head on his shoulder, leaning his own upon it.

"Yes, child, I think the wrongs of women might be written by an old lawyer; why not? We are behind the scenes, and no glare of footlights can dull our vision."

The young wife was silent. She was not the woman to grow hysterical, and she

had suffered too long in silence to forget herself now; but, one by one, some scalding-hot tears fell on the lawyer's hand, and he knew that her sore heart needed some outward expression; that, having once spoken, she would ever after be stronger and better able to endure her burden.

He held her there as an own father might have done, now pressing his lips to her brow, now patting the small white hands so tightly clasped together; he could feel her heart beat, and the great, suppressed sobs shake her slight figure, but he said nothing until he found her growing once more calm and quiet; then he said one word only,—

"Daughter."

"Yes, father."

It comforted her to hear him call her by that sacred name; for no one else could ever use it now.

"Do you think Aunt Crafts would like to go abroad with Harry's mother?"

The little woman brightened.

"Perhaps so; why, father?"

"It is part of my plan; but, in order to have it succeed, you must oppose it a little."

"Only a little?"

She was smiling now.

How well dear Father Hunt understood everything! And, only a little while ago, she thought herself absolutely friendless.

"A little will answer, I think. The matter must be kept from Harry, too; he will spoil all by his bluntness."

"I see, father; and perhaps Dr. Warner would advise her going on account of"—

"I thought she was remarkably healthy; 'disgustingly so,' I have heard her say."

"So she is; but you know her fondness for reading medical works? Well, lately she has discovered that her liver is not quite right, and she is sure that she will die, like her friend Miss Bailey, with an abscess on that organ."

"Capital little plotter! Warner has been coming out for a month or more to eat curds and whey; he shall come now and complete our work."

"But suppose something might happen?"

"We are working for the best good of all, child. Harry will never get well; you are all tired out; your aunt wants to go to Europe, but dislikes to leave you lest some of her dear ten thousand friends should say she was heartless, and left you with your sick husband; and Harry's mother" (he always said Harry's mother when speaking of his wife) "has a strong desire to join some friends over there."

"And then, father, dear?"

"And then, Pussy, you shall go to a little nest among the hills, and let your husband find out what a little treasure he possesses."

"Father Hunt, you are the dearest man in the world. No wonder you are so successful in your profession."

"Thank you, Pussy; if I succeed in making your life lighter it will be worth a dozen cases in court."

"There is Harry's bell; it has rung twice. Good-by, dear father. Bessie shall say an extra prayer for you to-night."

The little woman went to her husband's room, and the lawyer returned to his office; but both carried with them a little of the peace, which must ever come when we go about with the kingdom of heaven in our hearts.

Mopsy, on her way to read to the invalid, passed the lawyer on the walk; but he did not see her: he was thinking earnestly, and a smile rested on his handsome face.

"How happy he looks," said Mopsy; "and no wonder. He is rich, famous, and beloved; he has only other people's quarrels to trouble him; and when he is done with them he can be happy."

Mopsy was happy herself; very happy, she said; for the Captain had just brought

them a long letter from Natty. The farmer in whose family Natty was, also wrote that he liked the boy very much. He was bright, willing, and was fast learning to work. If his folks wanted to get rid of him, he would adopt him and give him a small farm next to his own the day he was twenty-one.

"Just think of it," said Mopsy to herself; "why, we couldn't give Natty to any one! Even the Captain laughed at that; but the farmer is very kind. To-morrow, the Captain is going to see Natty, if Spud continues better; he says he has business out there. Here is the house. I hope Mr. Hunt will be pleased, and will not speak sharply to his pretty wife. I know it hurts her, for she bites her lips, and her cheeks grow red."

Mopsy ran up the steps and rang the bell. As she did so, some one on the street called out, —

"Hello, Mopsy! Changed your boarding-place?"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ASSAULT.

Mopsy looked down from her height on the steps to see, not one of the boys as she supposed, but a tall man whose face seemed familiar. He had the figure of a gentleman and the air of a desperado.

"Who can it be?" she asked herself as she removed her wraps and left them in the hall.

The man walked away, muttering to himself, —

"I wonder if she knows anything about it, and how much? It wouldn't answer for me to show myself, in there. I am half tempted to do it, though, some day. If the old one was taken off I would. The old one would be glad to see me with a rope around my neck, but he is not

sharp enough. Ha, ha! a big Boston lawyer, and outwitted by me! Who cares? I was decent enough once, and could drive my span with the best of 'em. If I didn't pay for their keeping, so much the better for me."

He staggered on down Beacon Street, and then suddenly disappeared behind some buildings. He fancied himself unobserved, but a pair of keen eyes were watching his every movement.

"He is full of liquor again, and may prove troublesome," said the owner of the keen eyes. "I will lounge about until the reading is over. He evidently knows our young friend by sight, and is determined to be familiar."

Mopsy was unusually long; at least so it seemed to the rough man who was watching for her.

She came at last, however, and ran down the steps quickly. She had left her books behind her, and was carrying a

bunch of flowers, also a little package, evidently gifts from Mrs. Hunt to the sick woman she desired to see but could not.

If any one of the "fellows at club" had called Harry Hunt a tyrant, he would have fought them then and there; if any one of Mrs. Hunt's fashionable callers had asserted that she was not to be envied, he would have forbidden her his house.

Mrs. Hunt herself had said repeatedly that she, in common with her friends, had all the rights they needed, and why should restless women impose new duties on them? Nevertheless, this fortunate lady did not answer the promptings of her kind heart concerning the mother of "our little reader" as she called Mopsy.

Her husband had said most emphatically that she could not go; it was neither safe nor proper.

She, a lady and his wife, dragging herself down through the streets to some miserable hovel at the North End to con-

tract all sorts of vile diseases and breathe the pestilential air? No; it could not be thought of for a moment.

When Mopsy left, and ran away with her precious burdens, Mrs. Hunt once more ventured a remark, —

"I wish I could see that mother of hers. She must be lovely and refined with such a daughter. And only think of it, Harry, she has not left those rooms in years."

"Then she is quite used to it," was the reply.

"Oh, no, Harry dear! you are not used to yours, or at least you do not like to be confined here."

"That's quite another thing. I am a business man; and she, I dare say, is some finikin woman who was very extravagant, ruined her husband, and now sits down to be waited upon by the people who make it a kind of fashionable dissipation to visit the poor."

"You cannot mean it, Harry. You

know what you said about Bessie the other day, — if we were unfortunate, she might be where Miss Howard is."

"And if she were, I should not expect her to receive visits from wealthy people."

"I think wealthy people have a tremendous responsibility," said his wife.

"Good gracious, Jennie! you are positively growing sentimental; and it has all come about since you went to that what d'ye call it woman's meeting. Now let me tell you that philanthropy is a fraud. You give and give to some family, thinking them really poor, and suddenly you discover that they have a bank account, and own a fine house somewhere. Look at the creatures you have helped since we were married; frauds, nine-tenths of them."

"I know, dear, and for that reason I feel sure that the Associated Charities are quite right; it is 'not alms, but a friend. Now, I should like to go and see Mrs. Howard, and prove a friend to her. I

should like to for my own sake as well as hers."

The young wife's voice faltered a little. It was not so easy to speak one's thoughts to Harry, who snubbed and scolded or sneered, as it was to the dear old father, who seemed to understand at once.

Something in the woman's voice caused her husband to look at her. She was playing with a tassel of the sofa-pillow, and her eyes were downcast.

Really, she was not a bad-looking woman when she blushed. Some of his friends thought her handsome; and if a man must have one woman forever about him, Jennie was at least agreeable to look at.

While he was congratulating himself on his good fortune, she went on; perhaps he would listen, as he had not contradicted her.

"It was not the woman's meeting, as you call it, Harry, that caused me to think first about some of these things. It began

when baby came, and I used to lie there so helpless, with her still more helpless by my side. I used to think and think then; and I wanted to be a good mother, and make her a good woman. And then, long after, when Mrs. Lombard came and asked me to go to the Woman's Club, and listen to a paper on 'Training Children,' I was glad to go. I know you were very angry, and said I should never go again among that strong-minded set of fanatics, but you would never let me tell you about it. When I heard those mothers talking so sweetly and gently of their homes and their children, I began to think how much I had lost when my mother died, and I determined to do more for Bessie. Every one who spoke gave me some new thought; and now Miss Howard has been telling me of her mother, of her sufferings, her losses, her patience, and through it all of the wonderful training she has given her children. It makes me ashamed of this

sort of life, with its lightness and surface work, and I keep thinking that such a woman as Mrs. Howard might help me more than I could help her."

Evidently Mr. Hunt was somewhat affected by this touching statement; but the prejudices of a lifetime could not be swept away in a moment, neither could he strike his flag. Hitherto, his word had been law, even in the matter of wearing apparel; and he remembered with a sense of delight that a certain objectionable evening dress had never been worn since he said, in his autocratic way, "For Heaven's sake, Jennie, never put that thing on again." He did not remember that a hat of his, equally objectionable to her, was worn with a feeling akin to pride; in his eyes, man and wife were one, and that one the husband.

After a moment's silence he remarked, in a patronizing tone, —

"You are not the worst woman in the world, by any means, Jennie, and if you

choose to spend your own income on beggars, why, that is your affair; but I must insist that my wife shall duly consider her social position; and, for Bessie's sake, take care of her health."

"For Bessie's sake." The words rang in her head as she left the room.

"It is useless," she said to herself; "he either will not or cannot understand. Perhaps all men are alike."

A moment after, a cheerful voice sounded in her ears as he said to the maid: —

"All up-stairs, Margaret?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply; and in a moment more Father Hunt had taken Mrs. Hunt's flushed face between his hands, and wished her good-morning.

"I am going to scold you, Pussy."

"Don't, father; I could not bear it just now."

"Well, then, I won't; but see here, you must look after your little reader. This is a pretty story I have just heard."

"Tell me quickly."

"It seems she had just left your steps when a drunken rascal seized her hands and demanded her money."

"Oh, dear! and I had just given her five dollars for reading."

"Well, he did not get it. Brown fortunately was in the locality; and the rascal bolted when the girl shrieked, only to tumble against Brown and a policeman. The fellow is locked up, now."

"And Netta — Miss Howard, I mean?"

"Frightened a little, but all right. Pretty work for your aristocratic street."

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW FAR TO THE KINGDOM?

THE Captain did not go into the country on the following day. He did, however, call upon Mr. Harry Hunt to explain the absence of his reader.

Mr. Hunt was quite excited over the event; he insisted that the man should suffer well for it, and was very sorry to hear that Miss Howard was not feeling strong enough to read.

"She was quite worn out caring for a little friend of ours," said the Captain, "and her visits here were doing her a world of good. I am sorry she was annoyed; but she laughs about it now, and entreats her mother to let her come to you to-morrow."

"We might send the carriage for her,"

said the invalid, quite forgetting his words to his wife.

"That will not be necessary; she enjoys the walk, and for the short time you remain in town I will see that she is protected."

The Captain remained to read himself, and selfish Harry Hunt requested his wife to order lunch for two, which she did at once; not only ordering it, but preparing it herself with cook's assistance.

She quite longed to make a trio of the duet, and hear something of the descriptive chat with which the Captain entertained her husband. She was not invited, however; and, although the guest did not comment on her departure, he detected her desire to stay.

Never did the traveller talk more earnestly of things he had seen; never did invalid find a more agreeable companion or a more judicious nurse.

"Come up again, Brown; come often. I declare, my father is quite right; you

seem like an old friend. I began to mend from the moment you came."

"A merry heart doeth good like medicine," said the Captain. "I am very glad to see you so much brighter. If Miss Howard is unable to come to-morrow, I will fill her place; after that, I have imperative business in the country."

"Well, let us see you all we can; and if you find my wife down-stairs, send her up, will you?"

"I will state your request."

Was there a little sarcastic emphasis on the word request, or did Mr. Hunt fancy it?

The Captain did find Mrs. Hunt below. She was tying her little daughter's bonnet preparatory to sending her out.

As the Captain approached, she thanked him earnestly for his kindness.

"You have worked a perfect charm," she said, "and we can never thank you sufficiently. All your prescriptions are successful."

"Perhaps I can venture to make another."

"A dozen, if you choose; father thinks you worth a score of doctors."

"Then I shall presume to suggest that you go out and enjoy this fine air."

"Oh, no; Harry is sure to call for me, if I am out of sight. It is so hard for a man to be shut up in the house."

"That is a hackneyed statement which I dislike."

"Indeed, it is very old, I fancy."

"Yes; and it is one of those aged fallacies capable of mischief. A woman requires more fresh air than a man, consequently it is harder for her to be shut up in the house, especially when every detail of housekeeping falls to her lot. If there is any created thing which demands and requires an abundance of fresh air, it is a delicately organized woman. There is a great deal of needless sympathy wasted on my sex, Mrs. Hunt."

"Do you think so? I know we always pity men when sick, and try to amuse them, sometimes ineffectually."

He smiled as he answered: —

"Yes; you increase our selfishness and your own labors; but I forgot; your husband wishes to see you. Good-morning."

The next day Mopsy was quite able to read, and the Captain went away on his mysterious journey, after holding a long consultation with the lawyer.

Harry Hunt experienced a little disappointment when the girl appeared and informed him that his friend had left town.

"Where is his home, Miss Howard?"

"I do not know, sir."

"He has a room down there in your locality, has he not?"

"No, sir; he fitted up a reading-room for our poor boys, and he writes there sometimes; he has only stayed there since Spud was so sick."

"And who is Spud, pray?"

Mopsy found it easy to tell how the brother and sister were first made known to them, how the boys, her boarders, came and went, and how much good the Captain was doing.

A new world opened to the invalid. He had heard of the good work being done in that locality; he had even given his check to help it on; but it had never seemed a real thing to him. Why should it? He had not time, he said, to attend the public meetings; he had never examined one of the published reports; somebody was at work there, and it was a good thing; but why should he, Harry Hunt, trouble himself about it?

On this point he agreed with his "aunt-in-law," so he called Mrs. Crafts; it was the only thing they were ever known to agree upon. They had quarrelled on every topic, from the size and shape of the wedding-ring down to this very hour; but concerning poverty, crime, and squalor they

were a unit. Both detested it; both thought, if it existed, it should do so far from them; both considered all obligations of any nature cancelled, when they handed in a yearly check for a small amount to some interested friend.

True, Harry Hunt had talked with his wife about Bessie's being in Miss Howard's place if fortune should desert them; but he never for a moment believed it possible; and, until this young girl came in to amuse him with her pleasant voice and the fancies of others, the North End seemed just as far removed from him as the Dakota Mission, which Dr. Elocute talked about, one Sunday, every season. He gave something to both, and there all responsibility ended.

The author of "Adam Bede" states that "men never feel remorse." Mr. Hunt could not agree with her.

Something like remorse and shame combined visited him as he listened to Mopsy's simple story. He remembered his wife's

words concerning the good she might find in doing for others; he thought of his new friend Brown, and his devotions to these unfortunates. Surely, one man could not be so different from his fellows; if Brown was eccentric, the eccentricity meant something.

Perhaps this young girl, with her large, far-seeing eyes and honest face, could tell him more; perhaps she could teach him, could help him. If Jennie needed help in training the little one, why should he remain ignorant? He turned to Mopsy, at last.

"Do you think Captain Brown enjoys being down there among those people?"

"I don't know, sir; he seems to be very happy."

"Yes, he is cheerful; he comes in like sunshine, and cheers us all up. Do you know how old he is?"

"No, sir; I could never guess; sometimes he seems to be quite young; but he looked old and sad when Spud was so ill."

"Why should he grow so fond of a little beggar like that?"

Mr. Hunt asked himself the question; but Mopsy answered it.

"You see he believes, sir, that we have the kingdom of heaven within us; and if Spud is happy, and Mose and Jim Lahey, why, the good will go on growing and growing, and it can never end."

Harry Hunt looked at her steadily for a moment.

"And what does your mother believe?"

"She thinks just as the Captain does, and she says that the Industrial Home, and the workers in the charities, and all the visitors are only parts of the kingdom."

"What is the Home, anyway?" asked the invalid.

Mopsy was surprised.

"Have you lived long in Boston, sir?"

"Yes; all my days. Why, Miss Howard?"

"I thought every one must know about that," she said.

"I am a heathen, you see. What are you thinking of, Miss Howard?"

"I was wondering if that is what the Captain meant when he said, 'Heaven wasn't half so far from us, as Beacon Street from the North End.'"

This time, Mr. Hunt pondered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TELEGRAM.

"You must get your boy out of town," said the doctor one morning, soon after the Captain's return from his journey. "This hot weather is enough to demoralize the strongest constitution."

"I will go at once, if you will risk the consequences to Mrs. Howard."

"Crosby says she can stand it, and his say-so is a good passport anywhere."

"Will Dr. Crosby assist in her removal?"

"Certainly, if you request it. Have you prepared her for it?"

"No, I dared not raise any false hopes."

"I will see him to-day; in Spud's case, any delay is dangerous."

The subject of their remarks was still lying on the couch, which had been moved

into the middle of the room in order to give him more air.

He coughed slightly, as they spoke together in low tones, and both gentlemen looked anxious.

"A hard pull for him," said the doctor. "How did you find your other wards?"

"Happy, tough, and rosy. Natty is the picture of health, and Tishy is another creature; all she desires on this earth is the presence of her Jamsie."

"Can I go out of doors, Captain, up there?"

"Every day, when you are once there, my boy."

"Can I see them make hay?"

"Of course you can, when the time comes."

"I wonder how it looks; I have read about it in books."

"Oh, Jamsie, boy," said the doctor, "you will be in Paradise then. Think of the wild-flowers, the birds, the bees, the beauti-

ful sky, and the air which almost lifts you off your feet."

"I never saw the country, sir."

"Poor child, and I cursed my fate because I was born there; but now a whiff of air from my father's pine woods would be better than a glass of wine."

"Come up, doctor, when we are all settled, and spend a week with us."

"And leave some poor soul to suffer while I am having a good time? Preach according to your own practice, Jack."

"What makes you call him Jack?" asked Spud.

He had grown very familiar with his doctor during his illness.

The Captain blushed a little, but the jovial doctor hastened to say, —

"Why, we were college chums, laddie, and it's a trick we had at old Harvard."

"Oh!" said Spud, "I thought the Captain came from India, and did not know any one."

"He wasn't born in India, chicken, any more than you; but I must go and reconcile the Princess to her fate."

It was not a difficult task, evidently, for soon after the doctor's merry laugh rang through the rooms, and he was heard to say "all right" in his cheeriest tone as he descended the stairway.

Mopsy was not so easily disposed of. She had grown used to her boys and her daily burden, and her faith was not strong enough to convince her that the work would go on either in that form or another, if she withdrew.

"Good work never fails because one worker falls out by the way," said her mother. "We will let the Captain manage this for us, as he has done before. If we wish to return in the autumn, the way will open for us."

Two weeks later, a little group sat on a small rustic piazza among the Berkshire hills. Mrs. Howard was there, seated in

her chair as of old; Jamsie, too, with his hollow cheeks and hollow cough; Natty, rosy and plump; and little Tishy, with "a really, truly doll like little rich girls" in her motherly arms. Not far from Jamsie's hammock sat the Captain, reading the evening mail, which a kind farmer had brought them on his way from the village post-office.

"What is the matter, Captain?" asked Jamsie, who detected the very slightest look of annoyance on the face of his beloved friend.

"I must go into Boston to-morrow."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed the children in chorus; and "Oh, dear!" repeated Tishy, "you know we are going to Bubble Brook to-morrow."

"Bubble Brook will keep for an entire week, my little girl, and when I return we shall have many visits there. Perhaps I can carry the doctor out there."

"Do, do," exclaimed Natty and Jamsie.

"A very dear friend of mine is quite ill," said the Captain, "and I must not desert him in trouble, you know."

"But the schoolroom is not finished," said Natty.

"It is vacation now, and the schoolmistress requires rest."

This, with a glance at Mrs. Howard, who was quietly enjoying all about her.

"The schoolmistress will soon be ready for anything," she said, "when she has once fairly recovered from her surprise."

"What surprise, mamma?" asks practical Natty.

"Our home, here, and my own ability to move even a very little."

"Oh, you will be climbing Baldy, some day, or that other little mountain close by. I wish Spud would hurry up and get well; I want him to go fishing with me."

Natty, robust and strong, grew impatient as the days went by.

"I can before long," said Spud, raising

his head up to look about him; "see, I can help myself ever so much."

The effort caused him to cough, and the Captain gently supported him.

"Nothing ails me now but the cough."

"Natty, how would you like to have some of the poor fellows from Boston come up for a country week with us?" asked the Captain.

"Fine, if they knew how to fish, and weren't afraid of snakes."

Natty did not know fear.

"Then I will try to bring out a guest or two, unless your mother objects."

Was Mrs. Howard ever known to object when a kindly deed was proposed?

"Certainly not; we could put a bed in the storeroom; and the poor things would find so much to enjoy."

"Will the new woman be equal to extra labor?" asked the Captain.

"Quite, I think; she is so glad to be in the country once more."

"Then we will consider it settled, unless Miss Netta has other plans."

"She should be here now," said Natty; "those Boston folks keep her too long."

"She is simply reading to the sick gentleman, as she did at home," said her mother.

"How far is their place from here, Captain?" asked Mrs. Howard.

"About three miles. They are not quite settled yet; but the invalid was anxious to have his readings continued. Here comes the missing one, now."

"Oh, Mopsy!" said Tishy, "only think, the Captain has got to go way into Boston again, and we can't go to Bubble Brook."

"Must you go?" asked the girl, with a swift, regretful glance.

"It is imperative. But, tell me, why are you walking home; that was not in the bond?"

"It was a whim of mine; I would not let the man drive me all the way; the earth feels so good under my feet."

"And how does Mr. Harry find himself after his drive of yesterday?" asked the Captain.

He always spoke of them as Mr. and Mrs. Harry, and the children fell into the habit quickly.

"He is much better; slept well, and is hungry, he says."

"And his wife?"

"I found them all in the kitchen. She was making velvet cream, and Mr. Harry was holding Bessie and watching his wife. I never saw him look so happy before."

"It works like a charm," said the Captain softly.

He was looking at the boat Natty was sailing in a pan of water, and the children thought he was complimenting Natty's work.

Mopsy knew better.

"If you go into Boston to-morrow, I think I shall not go over to Cliff Cottage," said she; "there will be work for me at

home. No one else can move mamma, and the children" —

"You might omit one day," replied the Captain; "our friends have so many new duties now, they will not miss us as they did in town. I should not go, if it were not very important."

"Netta, dear, you did not intend to suggest that our claim upon the Captain's time has any foundation save that of his own generosity? I am sure he has wasted too much upon us already."

"No, mamma," said Mopsy, as she looked dreamily at the purple mountains in the distance. "I suppose he must go away some time, and never come back. I was only thinking that all this was so pleasant, and we were so happy, it seemed a pity to lose any of it."

"I shall lose as little as possible, you may be quite sure," and then he leaned forward and dropped a letter into the girl's lap.

While she was reading it, a woman came up the little path beneath the trees and paused before the group.

"Does Cap'n Brown stop here?" she asked.

"I am he," said that gentleman, rising.

"Well, here's a telegraph that my Jim brung up from the junction; he's foreman on No. 140, an' he said you must hev it to once, so I brought it along."

The Captain read it eagerly. Only three words, but startling.

"Come at once. — CROSBY."

CHAPTER XIX.

ISA.

WHILE the bearer of the message sat upon the steps resting and gathering up information to be spread about the neighborhood, Captain Brown was striding toward the junction five miles away. Only three trains stopped at Eudora, the nearest station to the new home, but an evening freight would be at the junction about ten o'clock. He must strike this, if possible, and get into town as best he could; perhaps the through night express would water at Hampton. If so, he could push on without much trouble.

The unexpected summons had not rendered him forgetful. Into his breast-pocket he hastily thrust some papers, a clean collar, and some handkerchiefs; and in response

to the queries of the children as to the time of his return, he had said only "as soon as may be." His coolness deserted him as he hurried on, for he was constantly saying, "If I should be too late, too late, how could I endure it?"

He walked faster and faster, although the night was warm, and at last reached the junction three minutes before the heavy freight train came in.

"Can you let me go into town?"

"It is against orders, sir."

"In a case of life and death?"

"That might make a difference, I suppose; but there's nothing of the sort stated in our orders."

"Never mind, I must go; if any trouble is caused by my presence on your train, I will settle it with your chief."

"All right, sir. Personally, I am glad to oblige; officially, we must obey orders."

"I know your chief, sir. He never fails to do a kindness, if it is in his power."

That was enough. If the gentleman was a friend of the superintendent, even the freight conductor could permit himself to show his human side; and all the world knows that the Fitchburg Road cannot be surpassed for courteous and gentlemanly officials. So the Captain went into the caboose, and was made as comfortable as circumstances would permit. He could not rest, or think, or sleep, and the noisy cars forbade conversation.

"I will get you on the express," shouted the conductor. "We will telegraph for you, so you needn't worry about it. When a man has his best friend dying, money and ceremony don't count."

As the train drew its weary length along, the sky became overcast, and a terrific thunder-storm arose. The whole air seemed charged with electricity, and the lightning played along the tracks, while the thunder rumbled and rolled from ledge to ledge. When the express came tear-

ing down, the storm was at its worst, but the Captain hurried on board, and was whirled away. Boston seemed farther and farther from him, so great was his eagerness. In at last, amid the pulling of brakes, the grating of wheels, and the innumerable noises about the great station. Captain Brown was the first to get off, and as he sprang into a shaky-looking carriage, with a wheezy horse to draw it, he said hurriedly: —

"Drive like the wind to Court Street."

Once there, he found the watchman still on duty, and glad to see him.

"Heard anything from Brookline since last evening, Bronson?"

"Not a word, sir. Upton went out last night, and said they were expecting you."

The Captain went up-stairs, and unlocked the door. On the desk in the private room he found several letters and some important papers. These he secured

and hurried away to obtain a fleeter steed for his ride to Brookline.

"I will get there long before they can expect me," he said to himself; "and if it be not too late, all will be well."

He did not pause to think of his weariness, of his damp clothing, or haggard looks; his one prayer was to be near his friend before speech became impossible. He reached the house at last — worried, wearied, and anxious. Thomas saw him coming, and opened the door; evidently the poor fellow had been on duty all night.

"How is he?" was the Captain's hurried question.

"Easier, sir, and able to talk; he calls for you constant, sir, constant; none of the others, but just you."

"I will go to him at once."

"Better brush up a bit, sir, and let me get you some hot coffee, sir; the doctor has just had some."

"Thank you, Thomas. I will take your advice. I must be fresh enough to remain with him if he wishes it."

While Thomas brushed him, and the pale, tired housemaid prepared his coffee, Captain Brown was thinking of one short week before. Only one week since, he was the honored guest of the man who was now stricken down. One week! and now the family was scattered, the wife on the ocean, the son and grandchild among the hills, and he, the worker whose genius and patience made all luxury and comfort possible to them, lying helpless, perhaps dying. "You must give me one day and night, Brown," he had said, "I want to see if I can keep bachelor's hall as I used to." And Brown had arranged matters for little Spud, and taken the day and night.

It had been a rare season for both, a communion of souls uncommon and delightful to the hard-working man of the world.

They talked far into the night, sitting in

the moonlight on the porch, and once again the lawyer was moved to say, "You were sent to me just at this time, Brown; I believe in my good old mother's special Providence. Yes," continued he, as his young friend did not speak, "I have not only taken more than a fancy to you, but I have one concerning you."

"Let me hear it, Judge."

"It always seems to me that you have undertaken to perform some particular thing, to fulfil some vow perhaps, and nothing will turn you from it."

"You are nearly correct, sir."

"Doing penance for some youthful follies, eh, Brown?"

"No, sir. I do not mind telling you, sir, that I once had a very dear sister. She was almost a part of myself; but, although I loved her so much, I loved fame and myself more. I went from her against her wishes, and won a certain degree of fame; but I lost her forever."

"Lost! You don't mean quite that, Brown?"

"It means just that to me."

"Indeed? Poor child! And all this charity work is for her sake?"

"For my own too. I must see certain wrongs righted before I can rest. She was compelled to marry a man she despised, and"—

"It's a crime,—a fiendish, desperate, contemptible crime," said the lawyer eagerly. "Thank Heaven, my poor little girl was spared that. I wish you might have known her, Brown; she was a lovely child. She has sat here on this very porch with me, and said, 'Uncle, dear, I shall never marry; I mean to take care of you when you are an old man. And I used to say, 'I would rather bury you, pet, than see you unhappy.' She was my brother's child, his only girl; and when he died I brought her to my home. Think of it, sixteen children in my father's house, and all gone now! It

does not promise well for my longevity, does it?"

"You are remarkably strong, sir; just in your prime, I should say."

"So was her father a splendid fellow."

"How old was your niece when she died, sir?"

"I would give my whole fortune to know when or where she died. It is a sad story. I have not spoken of her for years, now, until Harry mentioned her the other day. It is still a mystery. I was called away to Florida to see my sister, the wife of a planter there; she was very ill, and died while I was there. When I returned my darling had gone; run away, they said, with our coachman, a pretentious Englishman. The child had feared him, and begged me to send him away, but my wife would not hear to it. It broke my boy all up; he grew wild then, and somewhat dissipated. Worse than all, he turned against me. That was the hardest of all; but,

poor boy, he told me the other day that he thought I sent Isa from us, lest he should marry her."

"Was your wife fond of the young lady?" asked the Captain in a hurried tone.

"I can't say that she was. You see, she is dead set against cousins marrying; it is a hobby of hers, and she urged me to send Isa away to school. I couldn't, somehow; she was so loving and gentle, and so much like my own. If she went away for a visit, I was miserable. I missed her even more than Harry, she had such pretty, thoughtful ways. I used to think sometimes that Harry's mother was a trifle jealous of her, especially when I made my will and gave the children just alike. I talked with her about it; for it is only just and fair that a woman should have her opinion about the property she helps a man to earn or save."

"Your brother did not leave any other children?"

"Only one, a boy, a splendid fellow. Perhaps I have told you about him?"

"You mentioned him once, I think."

"He was two years older than my Harry, and a fine scholar, crazy for adventure, fond of travel, and as clear-headed as a man of forty. I wanted to make a lawyer of him, but he fancied the army; so I got him into West Point. He did well, stood high in his class, graduated, and was sent West. He used to write me some grand letters. He finally went abroad."

"And you never heard from him again?"

"Only a few times, and that convinces me that he is dead. If he were living, Jack would never neglect his old uncle or his sister."

The Captain rose and paced the piazza.

"What is your wife's theory concerning him?"

"Oh, she thinks he was led astray, and cares no more for us."

"Was she fond of him? as fond as you?"

"Well, no; the fact is, when I brought the children home she was bitterly opposed to it; and Harry tells me that the boy was tormented some, made to feel he was in the way, and all that; perhaps she did make it a little uncomfortable for them. Harry says she taunted Isa with being a beggar; but, bless you! she was not. Their father left a snug little sum, and I invested it for them. It has never been touched — not even in my search for her. Harry's mother did not mean to be hard over the young things; but women are strange, and somehow she got the idea that these children stood in Harry's way."

"Why did the girl submit to it? Why did she not complain?"

"It was for my sake, Harry said. He did not know for a long time how things were, and then he swore he would marry his cousin. He was only waiting to hear from Jack. Isa never would believe he was dead."

"Did she leave any message for you when she left?"

The Captain was still pacing the veranda in nervous haste as he asked his questions.

"Yes; oh, yes. Since I have troubled you with these personal matters, I will show it to you, if you like. Come inside, Brown; it must be getting late."

Both men entered the house, and the lawyer seated himself at a desk in the library. He unlocked drawer after drawer, and at last took from a small box a much-worn piece of paper, which he handed to his guest.

"There it is, Brown; I know it all by heart, and I never gave up searching for her until three years ago, when I heard that she was dead."

"May I take this to my room, sir, and read it at my leisure?"

"Certainly, Brown, certainly; and do forgive me for boring you in this fashion. It has been a relief for me to speak; I

couldn't well talk of this to my own family."

The Captain's hand trembled as he shook the lawyer's warmly, and said with feeling, —

"It has helped my trouble to hear of yours, sir. Good-night."

CHAPTER XX.

A FAREWELL LETTER.

GREAT tears stood in the young man's eyes as he finished reading the following touching note: —

DEAREST UNCLE, — I am going away for your good. I did not know before that "you wished it." I did not dream that you were anxious to have Harry marry an heiress, and I was in the way. Why did you not tell me? I love you so much, I could do anything for you — even this. All these long years you have been father and mother to me, and, whatever happens, no one must blame you. Dear, dear, uncle, you must tell Jack why I went. You must tell him that it was duty, and I could not stay and see you unhappy.

I don't know where I am going; they will not tell me. But I shall write to dear Jack, and tell him all. He will come for me; he will find me, I am sure, and you and Harry must forget me. He will marry the heiress you wish him to, and I will do all I can to be a good woman, and honor the old

name. I am crying hard, uncle. I can scarcely see for tears; for the little clock which you gave me tells me that it is almost time for me to go, and they are waiting for me in the arbor by the brook. I will not take anything but my mother's jewellery, and a few keepsakes you have given me. "Beggar" as I am, I cannot rob you. Good-by, dearest uncle. For your sake I will try to be happy; and if they tell you that I am ungrateful, do not believe it. I have promised — they made me do it — not to tell you one word, or even say good-by; but I must — I must. Let no one see this letter, not even Harry. If he has "tired of me, and wishes to marry the heiress," I can forgive him, and hope he will be happy. O uncle, dearest and best friend, I am going away from you! I do not know where; but they tell me it is for your happiness, and therefore, dear, generous father-friend, I go, but my heart will break.

Your loving

ISA.

It was morning again, and the lawyer was in his garden, giving directions concerning the care of certain plants. The Captain saw him from his window, and saluted him. As he looked up, the younger man detected deep lines about his eyes, and a weariness which seemed unusual.

"He is killing himself with work. I must get him away from it. I dare not tell him now, until the proof is in my hands; then his kind heart will not be wounded unnecessarily."

Then they breakfasted together, and at last the lawyer spoke of the subject which had kept him tossing all night without sleep.

"What do you think of her letter, Brown?"

"That she was all you described her,—loving and good."

"But the mysterious part of it?"

"I fear that a cruel wrong has been done, and an innocent girl has suffered."

"But would you dare hope that she still lives, that I might see her once more? Why, Brown, I would give ten years of life to see her again, and be able to tell her how dear she was to me!"

"I could not answer your questions this morning, dear judge. Give me time,

and we may weave something out of this wretched tangle."

"Thank you, Brown. You cannot understand how much happier I feel since I told you. Why, I have looked in every face I have seen for years, hoping to find some trace of her. There is one more favor I would like to ask."

"Name anything you wish, sir."

"Well, it is about her money. If it is too late, if we can't help her, I want every dollar spent for motherless girls, and I want you to take charge of it; and, Brown, Harry's mother need not know anything about it."

One week since they had talked thus, in the very room where the Captain sat now, and life had grown stranger and more mysterious for both. The Captain finished his coffee, and went up-stairs. The doctor met him at the door of the sick-room, and answered the anxious questions expressed only by his eyes, with, "More comfortable;

mending, we hope, and mad to see you. He is very nervous. Come in."

"My dear boy," said the judge, taking the Captain's hand in his, "I knew you would come, and now I feel easier."

Something in the words as well as tone brought tears to the young man's eyes, but he pressed the hand he held, and sat down.

"Brown, I know my danger. It was only 'a slight shock,' — one side is all right; but they cannot deceive me, and I must set my house in order.

"Doctor, will you leave us for a short time? The Captain has charge of my private business."

For two hours they sat alone; two memorable hours, never to be forgotten. Was the tangle unwinding?

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAWYER'S DEEP SORROW.

"You have talked long enough now," said the Captain gently, "and Crosby has been beckoning me to come out."

"Are you *sure* it is all written as I said?"

"Exactly, dear judge."

"Then call Crosby in, please."

The doctor came, and gave him some medicine, while the Captain attempted to leave.

"Don't go, Brown; don't go, unless you are tired."

For the first time he seemed to observe his friend's weariness, and he asked quickly, —

"How did you get here?"

"Partly on foot, partly by train."

"Then go lie down at once, and I will sleep; but first send for Judge Livermore. I must see him. You see, I am taking you at your word, and ordering you about as if you belonged to me."

"There you are quite right."

"And, Brown, don't let the papers make a mess of it; don't let them talk of me as if I were a wreck. If it were not for this right leg I should be all right."

"We will have you among the hills in a few days, sir."

"How are they all up there?"

"Well and happy."

"Thank God for that! And Jamsie, your little chap?"

"Pretty feeble, sir; the cough hangs on."

"Poor fellow."

"You really must not talk any more, Judge," said the doctor.

"All right, then; I won't. Lie down, Brown, and we will finish our work after dinner; I never saw you look so tired."

The Captain went away, and found a delightful resting-place in a hammock on the shaded piazza. He thought himself too tired and too anxious to sleep; but nature revenged herself, and he not only slept soundly, but sweetly, for hours. When he wakened, Thomas told him that the judge had rested well, had taken some nourishment, and "seemed as good as new."

The man's evident pleasure led the Captain to say, —

"You are very fond of your master, Thomas?"

"And well I might be, sir; I have been with him since the first year he came to this place."

"You were quite young then?"

"Lord love you, sir! a green boy."

"Then you know all the family, Thomas?"

"Better than my own, sir, since I have no knowledge of father or mother; and the judge, he took me from the street, Heaven bless him! Mr. Harry and his cousin, Mr.

Jack, were about my own age when I came, and Miss Isa was like a fairy. You ought to have seen Miss Isa, sir; she was the idol of my master. But none of us can speak her name now; the mistress forbids it, and there's no call to."

"Is she living, Thomas?"

"That's a hard question, your honor; she went away most mysterious."

"Went away? How, and where?"

"There are them as could tell, sir, if they pleased," said the man shortly, as he went around to the stable.

"I believe the fellow knows something himself," said the Captain softly. "If he does, the poor sick man up-stairs may be satisfied sooner than I feared."

It was evening now, and still the judge rested quietly. His mind, always clear and active, busied itself with many cares; but the body was painless and still.

Dr. Crosby had gone in town, promising to return later in the evening, and Captain

Brown sat beside the bed, noting every look and movement of the patient. In the next room, a nurse was dozing on the luxurious lounge.

"Brown," said the sick man.

"Yes, Judge?"

"I cannot sleep again; my brain works like an engine."

"Let me try my mesmeric power; I often soothe Jamsie in that way."

"I'm afraid that it will be useless. You see, I have not slept of late; hardly one night since Harry told me, and I won't resort to drugs."

The young man moved his chair nearer, and softly stroked the waving hair, which had still few threads of silver mingled with the brown.

It soothed the patient, and soon his voluntary nurse was rejoiced to find him sleeping.

He stole noiselessly away to a little writing-table near, and began to write;

first, a long letter to Mopsy, telling her of the kind lawyer's illness; then to Harry and his wife, with the same story, begging them to be quite patient, for a few days would bring them all together once more, and Cliff Cottage should prove a veritable convalescents' home; then a third letter directed to a distant postmaster. Just as the last one was finished, the doctor returned.

He was rejoiced to find his patient's condition so much improved. "It looks like solid improvement, too," he said to the Captain. "Why, we shall have him up in a day or two."

The night passed quietly, and the morning brought Judge Livermore to his friend.

"A touch of sciatica, eh?" he said, as he bent over him. "Well, well, Hunt, you and I are growing old; however, we take life pretty easy, don't we?"

It was pleasant to see these old friends together; pleasant to know that the hard side of life had left them still hopeful,

cheerful, even young. Small souls acquire bitterness in life's school; grand ones grow mellow as the sands run short. The necessary business being finished, Judge Livermore went his way, after urging his friend to call on him for any duty at any time; and once more the Captain was alone with his friend.

As the afternoon wore away, the judge grew talkative, and seemed to enjoy his listener.

"Must you get back to the sick boy soon?" he asked.

"No; he has excellent care."

"If you can remain with me, Brown, and keep things straightened out a bit here and at the office, I wish you would. The servants are very good, but a man"—

"I understand; when I was so ill, abroad, I thought I would give even my youth for the sight of a home face, or the sound of a home voice."

"Then you will stay?"

"As long as you desire."

"Thank you, Brown. Perhaps I needed something to pull me down. I have been working tremendously for the past twelve years. Any machine would require rest and repairs by this time."

"We will insist on both now," said the Captain; "and if I am to be chief nurse, you must freely express your wants."

"I shall tire you out, Brown. I was sick one season when *she* was here, and the dear child was eyes and hands and feet. Harry's mother detests a sick-room. She is eager to be away, fretted by the restraint, and so restless she makes you feel as if your bed were made of nettles. It is her nature, and the boy is like her, — imperious and impatient when he is not well."

"I was about to ask you if we should summon your wife; she might return at once, and perhaps she will be annoyed if she is not informed."

"Oh, no, no, no, Brown! They will have a charming trip; they'll be gone until September, perhaps, and if anything should happen to me it will be time enough. I should not like to spoil her pleasure, and the aunt-in-law is quite as much at home on that side as this."

"I thought it might be better to have a woman about; you might be more comfortable, and have many delicacies which your male nurse will not think of."

"No, boy, I am satisfied it is all right; but I miss Isa, poor girl. I was never ill before without her, and somehow she is constantly in my thoughts. Brown?"

"Well, sir?"

"Will you think me an absurd old fool if I ask you to bring a picture here which you will find in the seal on my watch-guard?"

"I will get it at once."

He unclasped it for the sick man, and sat by while he gazed at it long and earnestly.

CHAPTER XXII.

MOPSY IS CALLED AWAY.

It was raining hard among the mountains; and the children were watching the clouds as they formed into fanciful shapes, now lying low upon the sides of Baldy, now forming a perfect cap on his crest.

"No mail for us to-day," said Mopsy, with an almost reproachful glance at the sky.

"It may clear, by and by," said her mother, "and some of these good farmers will remember us; they seem very ready to do us a kindness."

"I don't quite like the freedom with which our mail is handled," responded Mopsy. "Only think of that old man keeping the Captain's letter all night at his house, because he did not feel like coming here with it!"

"And the papers too," said Jamsie; "it is so queer not to have a paper every day."

"They are always sent to us," said Mopsy; "the Captain ordered them, for I heard him say that a daily newspaper was in itself a liberal education."

"Who cares for reading?" said Natty; "I like to watch the hills, and the water running down. Look, Tishy, look! the brook over there has made a new place, and will fill up our garden."

"It will all be drowned out," said Tishy mournfully.

"There's a man coming with a rubber coat on. He is going to stop here, I do b'lieve," said Jamsie, raising his cropped head from his arm-chair.

The man was coming; and in a few moments he stood upon the little porch, stamping the mud from his rubber boots.

Mopsy opened the door, and a look of disappointment crossed her pretty face.

It was Horace from Cliff Cottage.

"I have a note for you; here it is, miss. It came in one to my master, and he wanted me to bring it over; and they would like to know, special, how you are to-day."

"Step in, Horace, and let me read this; perhaps it requires an answer."

"You have had a long, wet walk," said Mrs. Howard kindly.

"That's no harm, ma'am. Better for me than taking out the horse or getting the buggy covered with mud. These roads are uncommon hard in a storm."

"O mother!" exclaimed Mopsy suddenly.

"Well, dear?"

"Mrs. Gaffney is very ill, and wants to see me. The Captain writes to say that he will meet me at the train if you think it best for me to come, and here is a ticket. The doctor thinks Mrs. Gaffney will die, and Mr. Harry says if I am to go he will send me down to the village with Horace."

"Then your buggy will get muddy, anyhow," said Natty the practical.

"It may, for a lady, but not for myself," said the man.

"Well, if you go, take me down with you, and let me have the ride back," said Natty.

"What shall I do, mother?"

Horace was invited into the kitchen to see Mrs. Downing, who reigned supreme there. Close at Horace's heels went Natty and his fast friend, Tishy.

"Now we will discuss matters," said Mrs. Howard. "Evidently the Captain expects you, and perhaps you can comfort poor Mrs. Gaffney. I cannot refuse a dying woman any request, but I dread unspeakably to have you return there in the heat when you are improving so fast here. We might ask one of the visiting ladies to see her and minister to her."

"O mother, that would not do! She could ask them herself if she wished; and, besides, hear this:" —

"The woman seems to have something on her mind which she cannot or will not impart to any one but yourself. Suky's mother has your little room exactly as you left it, and my friend Dr. Walker's sister will act as chaperon. I have endeavored to pacify her without sending for you, but she insists, and I hope you will soon be able to return to your new home. Miss Walker and myself will meet you at the 2.30 train, unless your mother objects. If you cannot come, please send a telegram from the junction. Horace will take it for you, and you will find a blank on the table in my room."

When Mopsy had finished reading, her mother said quietly, —

"It is another duty, dear, and I think you must go."

Mopsy did not require any urging. She remembered many little kindnesses she had received from the sick woman, and she was not a little curious concerning her boarders and the work at her old home.

Horace was sent away with a brief note of regret to dear Mrs. Harry, who would not see her for several days, and then the work of preparation began.

The rain still poured, but Mopsy did not mind; her rain-cloak and rubbers had often protected her, and they could do so now. Tishy and Natty were both tucked away in the buggy for a fine drive home, and Mopsy gave numberless charges to Mrs. Downing concerning her mother and Jamsie.

"My mistress told me to tell you that you was not to worry about them," said Horace, "for she would go herself to see that they were all right; and if you could get time to go out and see the old gentleman she would be much pleased to know just how he was getting along."

"I certainly will," said Mopsy; "and I wish she could go herself; but the Captain says it is not necessary."

"You see, her husband needs her, miss, and no matter what comes, he is the first with her, though she sets great store by the judge."

When the young traveller reached the sta-

tion she found a woman waiting, like herself, for the down train. Mopsy glanced at her for a moment, and then renewed her charges to Natty.

Would he please remember mamma's tonic every two hours? Would he be sure to wait upon poor Jamsie, and not forget the new bantams in the little coop? Would he also remember the milk every night, and go for it in good season?

Natty said "Yes" to everything, and did not enjoy being sent away with Horace before the train came, lest Mr. Harry's horse should be afraid.

Mopsy saw them well started on their return, and then began to look about her. Some parts of the platform at the station were quite dry, and, as the stationmaster said the train was not due for fifteen minutes, she began to walk around and around. The hills beyond were very beautiful with mingled mist, cloud, and rain, and the river near roared and roared as it dashed over the

rocks and under the covered bridge over which the party had just passed.

Mopsy found herself looking, now beyond the station, and now in it. At one end, a small storeroom held a motley collection of articles, — trucks for moving baggage, sides of beef and whole sheep going into market, bags and boxes of all sizes and shapes, and in a cage some fowls on their way to a marketman in town.

Mopsy amused herself with feeding them some oats which stood in a peck measure near by, but suddenly ceased from doing so when a shrill voice said, —

"I have seen you before."

"I HAVE SEEN YOU BEFORE," A SHRILL VOICE SAID.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HANNAH SWEETON.

Mopsy started, and dropped a handful of oats in so doing. She saw before her the tall, gaunt woman she had noticed in the dismal ladies' room.

"Going to Boston?"

"Yes," said Mopsy.

"So be I. Jim's girl wants me to come down. Guess you don't remember me, do ye?"

"I think not."

"Why, I fetched a telegraph up to your house to yer uncle, or the man that lives there."

Mopsy brightened.

"Oh, yes," she said kindly; "and your son is an engineer."

"Oh, no; he's fireman, Jim is, and has

been on the road ever sence it cum through. He's going to get married some day. She's a milliner down to Boston, and she sot out to have me come down, or else she wouldn't come up here again."

Mopsy looked at her new acquaintance. Her present dress was not as becoming nor attractive as the old sunbonnet and calico gown she had seen her wear at their first interview.

"I didn't feel's if I could go just now," continued the woman; "but Jim's all I've got left, and I reckon you can't say 'No' to him very easy. He and she sot their heads together, an' I, jist like an old fool, said 'Yes.' I know I shall be sorry; for it's ten to one if Maria don't forget the cream until it's too old, and the butter will be just about spoiled!"

"Have you a good girl?" asked Mopsy.

She was anxious to be polite, and did not know what to say.

"Girl? No; Jim's all I have."

"But you spoke of Maria."

"Land sake! she's brother Job's oldest girl. She's a schoolmarm to the village, and her term's up; so her uncle, he set to to get her over to keep house for me. I expect she'll make a mess of it, for she's awful fond of singin', and Jim's organ is right there in the keepin'-room; an' between dad's likin' to hear her sing and her likin' to do it, I suppose it'll be a sort of hallelujah all the time. Dad's easier than an old shoe; he won't care; but it won't last only a week."

"Then you will only stay a week?" asked Mopsy.

"Couldn't stop any longer; Maria an' dad would have everything higglety-pigglety by that time. How long be you going to stay?"

"I do not know; I am going to see a sick friend."

"Fever or anythin'?"

"I do not know; she is an old lady, and wants to see me very much."

"S'pose you know the way?"

"Yes. I can go almost anywhere in Boston."

"Do tell! Now, I don't believe I could, if I lived there from now to Judgment Day. I went down once with dad, and once with Jim, and I was completely turned round. Even the sun set in the east. But here comes the train; wish it was Jim's, but it ain't. You better git into a seat long of me, for it is awful risky travelling alone."

Mopsy smiled, and followed the strange figure. The woman's fashionable bonnet, evidently a present from "Jim's girl," seemed to be laughing at the rest of her costume, a shiny black silk, made in the fashion of at least ten years ago.

As it was raining, she had covered this with a large shawl, although the day was warm, and on her arm she carried a large carpet-bag of the pattern familiar to all searchers in old attics. She had several

bundles besides; also an immense bunch of brilliant marigolds tied up with tansy.

The combined odor overcame Mopsy; but she managed to remove the evil by suggesting the propriety of putting them in the rack overhead, where they would be less likely to wither.

"I don't see how your ma can send such a young girl as you so far alone," said Jim's mother, after she was duly settled, and had time to observe the glances cast at her pretty companion.

"My friends will meet me in Boston," said Mopsy, "and no one ever troubles me."

She stopped suddenly as she remembered her encounter on Beacon Street.

"Maybe you'll go back about the time I do, and then it would be nicer for you, though I expect Jim's girl will be with me; she promised to come up if I would make her a visit first. There's a big family of 'em, — brothers and sisters; and

some of 'em is away now, so she wanted me to come when I could have a room all to myself on the back side of the house. I couldn't sleep a wink with all the noises going on under the windows; can you?"

Mopsy said "she was quite used to it, and did not mind the street noises at all."

"Should think you would find it still enough up our way."

"It is very beautiful," said Mopsy; "we are glad to be there."

"Suppose you won't stop longer than the summer?"

"I really cannot tell."

"Well, I reckoned that your uncle was kind of calculatin' to stay longer by his bargainin' for dad's hay, and buying that Jersey cow."

"Has he really bought a cow?" asked Mopsy, quite forgetting that she intended to say, "The gentleman is not my uncle."

"Land, yes! I wanted her, but I couldn't pay such a price as the Merton boys asked

for her; leastways, I wouldn't, though I saved a good bit, what with butter and rag-carpets and sich."

"Do you weave carpets?"

"Yes; a sight of 'em. There ain't a house between here and the Lower Junction that ain't got some of my work in it. You see, dad had a set-back by goin' out West, — lost considerable that way; so it upsot him, an' he didn't take hold like he used to. The mortgage to the Merton boys worried him; so I set to work, an' sez I, 'See here, dad, ef you think I'm a-goin' to see my house go inter the hands of the Mertons, you don't know me.' And I got a loom rigged up, and I worked pretty steady until I got sick; an' then I said, 'Better go slow, for a house ain't worth a cent to you after you're dead,' so I've kept along easier sence."

"And I hope you are all right now," said Mopsy. "I am sure you deserve to prosper."

She had quite forgotten the quaint dress, the hard, sun-burned face, and the rough hands encased in their cotton gloves. She was thinking of the brave soul which sustained the woman, and she said softly to herself, —

"Oh, dear! the tangles are up here, even in God's beautiful country."

"Yes, it's all right now, and we go to sleep under our own roof, thank the Lord! I suppose I might have set up to be fashionable or more stylish, but I've kind of had a feelin' all through that Jim would rather have an honest mother than a fine lady in debt. It's been putty tough sometimes, weaving, weaving, weaving on at night, when the rest were asleep, and then getting up in the morning to cook for the men-folks; but it is done now, and dad seems younger an' happier, and my Jim thinks he's got the smartest mother in the world."

"You make me think of a little verse I read to mamma yesterday," said Mopsy.

"What was it?"

"'Such a perfect life as hers again
In the world we may not see;
For her heart was full of love, and her hands
Were full of charity,'"

repeated the girl.

"Humph!" was the response; "nobody could ever write verses about me, but I like to hear 'em. Sometimes when I have been out in the berry pasture pickin' away, something would kind of sing to me besides the birds, and it would keep sayin' itself over and over; and by and by, when I couldn't stand it any longer, I would burst right out singin' some of the good old pennyri'al tunes my father used to sing. Pretty actions for a grown-up woman! But it was kind of satisfyin', and I don't know as I could have kept on without it once in a while."

"The soul's outing," said Mopsy softly.

"The what?"

"I heard the Captain talking to mamma

about outings for bodies, — the children's country week, you know, — and mamma said, 'Every soul needs an outing.'"

"The land sake! what queer folks you be at your house!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE END OF THE TANGLE.

Mopsy was silent after the last remark of her companion. She was wondering why Jim's mother considered her family queer, and what the Captain would say about it. She did not meditate long, for the woman roused herself to say, —

"See here, child, don't for patience' sake say anything about my singin' in the pastures and all that; it sounds awful silly."

"Oh, no," said Mopsy; "it is very nice, and I don't wonder you feel that way. I have often thought about it since we came here. These women who work so hard must get some of this beauty into their hearts, and they must think a great deal."

"Think! Why, bless your soul, child! many's the time I've laid awake at night

thinkin' of the world all around us, and we so quiet, half-asleep like. I said something about it to dad once, and he stared at me. Dad is a master-hand at raisin' tobacco, but he don't sense such talk. Women is different; they've been thinkin' since the world was made, and it's my opinion that their thinkin' has been behind a good deal of the work done in the world. I did have one good talk once about things in general with a young girl we had boardin' with us. Poor thing! I wish I knew what had become of her."

"Was she ill, Mrs. ——?"

"Land sake! I haven't told you my name yet, have I? Well, it's jest like me. My name is Hannah Sweeton. Dad, he's Jeremiah Sweeton — 'Jerry,' folks call him. I did set out to call the boy after dad, but since that fellow was to our house I've been thankful I didn't. You see, he was everlastin' and everlastin' talkin' about 'Tom and Jerry,' an' goin' down to the brook

a-pickin' mint to make what he called 'jewleps.' It used to grieve her. Sometimes her eyes would flash, but more times she would look just heart-broken."

"Was the lady his wife?"

"Yes, I suppose so; but it was a queer thing, anyway. It's a queer world; things are mixed up worse'n the carpet I wove for Miss Jepson. Say she, 'Miss Sweeton, I want you to make a perfect tangle of color; put in all those I have brought you happy-hazard;' and I did. There was a broadcloth from a bishop's coat lying right next to a piece of Miss Jepson's old bombazine; Boston and New York and Bombay and Calcutta pieces were joined and put in, side by side."

"Yes," said Mopsy, "the tangles are everywhere, as poor Jamsie says."

"That's the sick boy with the horrid cough, ain't it?"

".Yes; he is very frail."

"Well, I took a shine to him at once,

just as I did to her before I had seen her ten minutes."

"Tell me about her, please. It will be so nice to have you tell me about it, if she really lived here once. What was her name?"

"There, you've puzzled me. You see, it was the summer dad was away, and things were pretty blue for us. I couldn't bear to take Jim out of school, for I had always wanted more schoolin' myself, and so I got our schoolmistress to write a notice to one of the Boston papers about boarders; and one day I got a letter saying that a young married couple would like board for a week or two. The cars didn't come through to us then, and we had to meet the folks down to Hampton, so we had considerable writin' back an' forth. Jim wrote for me, and the bride's aunt wrote about it, an' said we was to take good care of her, as she has been insane, and we must watch her close, and not believe a

word she said, or talk to her, for it made her worse. If she grew better, they would send for her after a while. Well, they came, and that girl's face will haunt me till I die."

"Poor thing! Was she really insane?"

"No more than you are this minute. I used to watch her on the sly. She was afraid of him, and used to shiver if he put his hand on her. One night I found her lying on the wet grass under my bedroom window; and I brought her in, and put her on the lounge in the keepin'-room. She had been crying until she could not move, and when I said her husband would soon be back from the village she begged me not to tell him.

"'Oh, don't speak of this, dear, good woman, or he will kill me!' sez she.

"'You will kill yourself if you stay out in the dew in this way,' sez I.

"'I want to die,' said she; 'it would be rest and peace.'

"She was so young, I tried to reason with her; but she only sobbed, so I took her up-stairs, and put her to bed. And, by and by, he came in, roaring full; for he had been down to the store at the Corners, where they make drunkards every year; and he began to talk pretty loud, so I went to him, and told him unless he was quiet he must sleep in the barn. He behaved better after that; but it was plain to see that the poor child was afraid of her life. She seemed to have beautiful clothes, and the board always came regular from this aunt."

"Where did the aunt live?" asked Mopsy.

"Well, that was curious too. You see, sometimes the letters came from Boston, sometimes from New York, and once or twice from Lowell. Jim used to fret over it a good deal; and he said he would look into it sometime, if he *was* only a boy. When the man went to the village he al-

ways locked her in her room; but Jim used to let her out by a ladder at the window, and then they would be quite happy until it was time for him to come back. Jim said she wasn't insane; nothing would ever make him believe it. Still, she dared not speak out to us. Once she wrote a letter to some one, and Jim carried it to the junction for her; but the postmaster must have had orders, for the man himself brought it back, and I heard him say, 'None of your tricks, now; you belong to me, body and soul; and if you try this again, you'll suffer.' At last it wore on me so I was sick, and I told him he must go; so he went to Canada, he said, where he had folks of his own. Three times the poor thing tried to run away, and three times he brought her back. At last she grew too sick to struggle any more, and when they left I held her in my arms all the way to Hampton. There was something she wanted to tell

me, — something she tried to say over and over; but she was afraid of her life."

"Why didn't you have her write it down for you?"

"Bless you, child! it would do no good; he told every one she was insane, and our neighbors all believed it; and this woman, that aunt, wherever she was, backed him up."

"And you never heard of her again?"

"Never; only when I washed the white curtains in her room I found something written on the folds of one end. I did not see it at first, and so it was 'most rubbed out; but I took that one out of the suds, and put it out and dried it. The poor thing must have written it with burnt matches; for she never had a pencil, a bit of paper, or a newspaper allowed her after sending that first letter. I never could quite make out the words on the curtain; but I put it away, thinking it might come of use, and I kept it until last

year, when we was fixing up Jim's room; then I copied down the letters as they looked, and I've got them put away with the first letters from the aunt. Land sakes! here we are in Boston, child, and there's your uncle looking for you."

Little did he think that the awkward woman with Netta held one end of the tangle.

CHAPTER XXV.

MOPSY'S PROMISE.

MRS. GAFFNEY was indeed dying, — even Dr. Walker admitted it, — and she was ready to go.

When Mopsy entered her old home, she found one of the women in the house caring for her.

Mrs. Gaffney's eyes brightened with pleasure when Mopsy opened the door; and when the girl bent over her, and kissed her furrowed cheek, she said, —

"It's the only one I'll get, Miss Mopsy, for they are all gone, — me old man and me babies."

"Are you suffering much?" asked Mopsy.

"Only for air, dear; it's the lungs of me that is quite worn out. But I have something to tell you when you are

quite rested, and there's none but yourself by."

"Let me hear it now, Mrs. Gaffney, if it will make you happier."

"You see, Miss Mopsy, I've had a good bit of trouble coming up meself without father or mother, and it's that has worried me all this time."

"Talk slowly, and rest at times," said Mopsy, as she saw how hard it was for her friend to speak.

"I must be through with it before another ill turn takes me. It's about Spud and Tishy, miss. You see, when they came here I took pity on the mother, with her soft ways, and I knew she did not belong to the likes of us; and so I was as kind as I could be, seeing that my own old man was very restless, and making himself wretched. Well, one day, just before the poor thing died, she called me to her, and says she, 'Mrs. Gaffney, you have been kind to us since we came here, and I want

to thank you.' And I says, 'It would be a bad heart that would be otherwise to you, miss.' And then she says, 'I have a favor to ask, and that is' — O Miss Mopsy, it breaks my heart to tell it, seeing I was to blame."

"Go on, Mrs. Gaffney; I know you have not done anything really wrong."

"You see, it was about the letter, and I was angry with you that day, for it seemed like you knew; but you couldn't. Well, the dear lady says, 'I have suffered all my life, Mrs. Gaffney, but my children must not. I have wealthy friends here in Boston, and a dear, dear uncle who was very kind to me, and when I am gone there will be no more trouble, and he will care for my poor darlings. If I were to see him, and tell him how I have been wronged, it would break his heart; and I could never see him without telling him all. I want to spare him pain, even when I am dead; and so I suffer here, — not alone, for I have

my little ones, and you with your kind heart and willing hands, and, best of all, my hope, my trust in the everlasting promises.' And then she put a letter into my hands; and says she, 'Promise me that you will deliver this to the number and address written upon it as soon as I am buried.' And I said, 'Indeed I will, dear lady;' and she said, 'Promise that no one shall breathe one word of this to their father — my children's father.' You see, she never called him husband; I minded that often. Well, I promised that too, and I said of my own free will if any one got it from me it would be when I was dead; for, deliver it I would. O Miss Mopsy! may the Holy Mother forgive me for such rash talk, and I only a poor, weak creature!"

She rested again for some time, and then resumed her story: —

"Well, dear, that very night, before her delicate little body was in the grave, the letter was stolen from me. You see, my

old man brought in a sup of beer, and being tired-like and nervous over her laying dead up-stairs, and the boy takin' on so, an' her husband dead drunk — why, when my man says to me, 'Take a sup of this to warm your heart up a bit,' why, thin I took it, and not another thing did I know until it was broad day again, and the letter was gone. That was suspicious-like, 'cause I was alone with her so long."

"Don't cry, Mrs. Gaffney; you are too weak. It will come right now. I will find Spud's great uncle, trust me; only tell me the name."

"There's the great trouble of it, miss," she said, while tears of contrition rolled down her face. "I couldn't read myself, so I had just put it in the bosom of me dress, waiting to ask the boy to read it as soon as ever he could stop mourning for his mother. But before I ever did it the letter was gone; and all the while Spud was sick I said if he died of his poverty

it would be a sin on me forever; and I couldn't bring my mind to speak of it, seeing it might bring my own into trouble."

"Your own, Mrs. Gaffney?"

"Yes. You see, it was my own husband as must have took it, although he denied it; but, after that, him and Manning was great friends for a few days, and he stopped comin' to me for money. O blessed Virgin! how I have suffered for my sin!"

"And did your husband never confess?"

"There was no time, miss. You see, he was run over soon after at the crossing, and when he was brought in there was no letter to be found."

"Perhaps it has found its way to the right owner now," said Mopsy.

"If I could think that, miss, I could die easier; and that's what I want you to promise, for I know you will keep it true. I never dared tell Spud, the poor lamb!"

"What shall I promise, Mrs. Gaffney?"

"Just this: that you'll keep seekin' and seekin' until you find the gentleman they was to find; for I'll not rest easy in my grave until it is done."

"I promise," said Mopsy solemnly.

"And promise me, true and faithful, that my money shall be used for them if you fail; and if you find him, and they will not want for it, you are to keep it yourself, as the will says."

"But, Mrs. Gaffney" — began Mopsy.

"Say not a word, child, not a word; it's simple justice that an old woman without kith or kin should leave her hard earnings to them she has robbed."

"If I find their relative, then all will be well."

"Then it will be your own, Miss Mopsy, — all your own, though little enough it is; just the rent of this house, and a bit in the bank. The Captain knows, and it's all settled, miss, only you must not tell

him about the letter until I am at rest; for the shame would make me suffer, to see his kind face, and he here praying with me only last night! Where is he now, miss?"

"He has gone to his sick friend again; he will return here soon, he said."

"To think of his being so good to a poor old body like me! When his friend was making out the papers I said he must have the bit of money and the house, for I knew he would use it well; but the Captain said no, he had enough now for his needs, and was there no one I loved I could leave it to? And I said, 'There's not a being I am so fond of as Miss Mopsy, and yet the two little Mannings may need it more.' And then he said, so quiet-like, 'Do what you please with it, Mrs. Gaffney; leave me out entirely;' so there it stands, miss."

"It is very kind in you to think of me, Mrs. Gaffney; perhaps I shall be compelled to use money in my search."

"Never give it up until the last dollar is gone, if you would have me rest."

"I will never give it up, either with or without money," said Mopsy earnestly.

"You will not think of remaining here all night, will you?" asked Miss Walker, as she came in, about sunset.

"Oh, yes," said Mopsy; "it is a comfort to her, and I am glad to do so."

"No wonder my brother calls you a heroine. I could not stay in this ill-smelling place alone all night with that poor old creature, even if it would make her comfortable. I might be willing, you know, but the flesh is weak."

They were talking in the hall outside.

"There is nothing heroic in doing one's duty," said Mopsy, blushing; "and you know I am used to sickness and misery."

"You are an Easter lily in a tomb," said Miss Walker, giving her a good-by kiss. "Well, if you will stay, Miss How-

ard, I will send brother down to look after you, and thus relieve my conscience."

"Oh, no! I do not need any one. Suky's mother is up-stairs, the people in the house are kind, though poor; and, indeed, I won't mind, although the air seems stifling after a month in the country."

"Good-by, little sister of charity. I shall come and take you away in the morning."

CHAPTER XXVI.

BESSIE'S PRESERVER AT BROOKLINE.

"DID you say that you brought Miss Howard in town to-day?" asked Judge Hunt of the Captain, who was preparing some fruit for his friend.

"No; she came in, and I met her," said the Captain with a smile.

"But you sent for her. Didn't I hear you tell Crosby something about it, and about an old woman who wanted to see her?"

"Yes; the old lady will be buried to-day; and, after that, Miss Howard would like to call on you and deliver a message from your daughter."

"Poor Pussy! she is very fond of me, and I am of her. How my boy can shut his eyes to all her good qualities I cannot understand."

"He will be forced to discover them now. My last tidings proved the success of our plan."

"Say *your* plan, Brown. When will our little reader come out?"

"This evening, perhaps."

"I shall be glad to see her; and do you know, Brown, I have been thinking that the small amount you paid for that little shanty in the country is quite too small a recompense for saving our Bessie. I wish I could do something more for the girl."

"You must not forget our compact, sir. Neither Miss Howard nor her mother dreams that you were the purchaser; and the time may come, indeed I hope it will, when you can be of great service to the family."

"There must be a history back of her; no girl with that face and bearing could be a denizen of the North End without wrong-doing or serious misfortune somewhere."

"The old question," said the Captain:

"'Who has sinned that this man was born blind?'"

"Do you know her history, Brown?"

"I have gathered up something; perhaps Miss Howard will tell you more."

"I wish she would. It is a good thing for Jennie to know them. The poor little woman has had a superficial training, or rather none at all; and I argue that only pure coin will assert itself despite such heavy odds."

"You are quite right, too. Mrs. Hunt could always be relied on in an emergency; she will develop into a grand woman."

Three sincere mourners attended Mrs. Gaffney's funeral, — three who knew the warmth of her honest Irish heart, and the kindly deeds she was ever performing. Mopsy, the Captain, Miss Walker, and the doctor were all in the church by special request of the dead woman; but neither Miss Walker nor her brother could be considered mourners. Those who were sad, even while

they rejoiced at her release, were Mopsy, the Captain, and a poor old man for whom she had cared many long months. Mopsy was weary and worn. The excitement of her hurried journey, the night of watching, and the solemn charge given her, all seemed to depress her, in addition to her loss; for Mrs. Gaffney had been indeed her humble friend from the hour of her arrival in Boston. The church was crowded, the air hot and sickening, and all were rejoiced when they entered the carriages to be driven away.

How weary she was, poor Mopsy did not know until she found herself really on her way to Brookline. Then nature asserted itself, and she sank back on the cushions, pale and still. Captain Brown did not disturb her, save to put a carriage-pillow under her head. She was not sleeping, he well knew, and very thankful was he that the judge had sent Thomas in for them. As the air grew cooler beyond the city Mopsy rallied a little.

"Please excuse me," she said. "The air in the church seemed like prison to me, and brought back a terrible scene. It always affects me so. I wish it did not."

"I shall not forgive you if you try to talk; you must not carry that white face into my friend's sick-room."

"He is better now, is he not?"

"Oh, yes; sits up a little, and drives out now every day. He is quite like himself."

When the carriage drove up, the cook, a good, motherly old lady, came to receive her master's guest. She had been in the family a long time, and was very fond of the judge.

"I'll show you your room, miss; and the judge says you are to do just as you like in every way. If you feel like coming to his room for a few moments you are to do so; and if not, you are to rest."

"I will go to my room," said Mopsy; "I am too dusty to see him now."

She entered the room assigned her with

a beating heart; its freshness, its elegance and comfort suited her.

"This," said she, "seems like home;" and then she sat down and wept bitterly.

When Nancy, the second girl, knocked at the door, she thought she heard some one saying, "O papa, papa! why did we lose you, too?"

Mopsy recovered herself as soon as Nancy entered.

"The Captain sent these flowers up to you, Miss Howard; and he says you had better drink this, and lie down for an hour before dinner."

Nancy held on a silver tray some beautiful flowers and a glass of refreshing lemonade.

"Thank you, and the Captain too. Perhaps I had better lie down; I have been up for two nights."

"To be sure," said the girl; "and the judge was saying you had better have a glass of wine; but the Captain knows you

never took it, so master said, 'Tell her to order anything she likes, Nancy; for the young lady who saved our Bessie is to be made much of.'"

"It was such a little thing," said Mopsy; and then she drank the lemonade, and sat down to admire the flowers. After tossing her wealth of hair down for a good brushing, and bathing her swollen eyes, she decided to take the Captain's advice, and rest a while. She was quite frightened when she awoke to find the sunset rays stealing in at her windows and the house very quiet. She began to dress hurriedly, lest she might delay the regular dinner. "I wish I had something to wear besides my simple black gown," said she; "but mamma would call that silly pride." Her only wardrobe for the occasion consisted of her best black dress and a neat piece of fresh white lace which she carried in a paper. This she fastened with some pansies, and then went down. Captain Brown

was walking on the veranda, waiting for her, while, inside, the judge was listening eagerly for her coming.

"How bright you are after your nap, Miss Howard," said the Captain; "you are in no way related to the pale young lady who drove with me from town."

"No," said Netta lightly; "I am only her second cousin, or perhaps her fourth. Your lemonade, flowers, and a nap have worked a charm."

"Then let us go to the judge before it is lost."

The invalid was half reclining when Netta went in, and as she advanced toward him his face lighted with pleasure.

"My dear girl," said he, "how kind you are to come out here to see an old man! I shall never be able to thank you."

"I am very glad to come, sir; it is so beautiful, and I was very tired. I hope you will excuse me for going to sleep without seeing you."

"I will excuse everything you may choose to do, my dear, although I cannot half see you in this uncertain light. How is the mother, and that wide-awake little chap who wanted some money? The Captain is shaking his head at me, I see. You and I have never met before. You haven't performed an heroic act which makes me your debtor; you are simply a good little girl who visits sick people."

"That is all," said Mopsy, with a laugh; "and you are only the kind gentleman who needs to be visited; but we will be fast friends."

"Indeed we will, and Brown may try to be a tyrant if he likes. Do you hear, Brown? Miss Howard and I are old friends, — relatives, in fact, — and you are not to interfere."

"I sincerely hope your jest may prove a pleasant fact, sir," said the Captain; "you and I are rather destitute of relatives."

"Perfectly bankrupt on that score, Brown. But sit down, Miss Howard, until the bell

rings for dinner. After you have eaten as well as slept, I suppose our tyrannical friend will allow us to talk."

"And prove ourselves good friends, if not relatives," said Mopsy.

"I will be your long-lost guardian, saved from the wreck of a steamer, and found floating on a log," said the judge in a mocking tone.

Good heavens! What had he done? All the brightness faded from the girl's face, and she sat like one paralyzed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MEMORIES.

Captain Brown, who was standing behind Mopsy, or Miss Howard, as we must now call her, was surprised at the sudden silence which fell upon his friends. He had been an amused listener, and was secretly rejoiced to see the improvement in the judge. Dr. Crosby had said, "Rouse him, keep him cheerful, tell him stories, make him laugh, do anything and everything to amuse him," and the Captain had obeyed; but not once during his stay had he been able to make his friend laugh and joke as this young girl had done immediately on her arrival.

The Captain stepped forward a little to observe her face. She was terribly pale; he could see that even in the fading light.

Before he could speak, the judge had said tenderly, "What is it, my child; tell me, can I help you?"

"Nothing, thank you, nothing; I am better now."

"You are worn out, and I should remember it. Brown, as soon as you have dined, send her to bed."

"Indeed, you must not," said the girl, rousing herself. "I will explain it to you to-morrow, perhaps, and it is no fault of yours. I"—

The dinner-bell rang, and the judge hurried them away, declaring that he was in a starving condition himself, and must soon be permitted to go to the dining-room.

Early the next morning the Captain went away to town. He had important business matters to arrange for the judge; and, as he was executor, he must attend to the settlement of Mrs. Gaffney's estate. Miss Howard was up early, and breakfasted with him.

"What shall I do for the judge while you are gone?" said she.

"Obey Crosby's orders to the letter," he replied; "and if you could think of any little delicacy for his late breakfast, I know it would please him. Cook will welcome you to her kitchen, and a little praise from you will make her your firm friend."

The first pleasant task was to visit the garden, where, by the orders of its owner, she was desired to select anything she pleased. After gathering a few rare flowers she returned to the house. The nurse reported the judge still gaining, and quite hungry. "Could Miss Howard think of something for his breakfast?" She did think, and put her thought in form; for half an hour later she appeared in the sick man's room, where he sat awaiting the arrival of his tray. A table was drawn up beside his chair, and in a few moments Netta sat by him, offering her choicest

morsels, while the nurse went about his small duties.

It was a delightful repast. The fresh flowers in their dainty vase, the ripe fruit and costly china, all served to quicken the appetite.

"I have not enjoyed anything so much since my little girl left me," said the judge.

Netta's eyes sparkled. She remembered her mother's words when the Captain proposed this visit.

"It is just possible," said she, "that your presence may cheer him; and if you could do that it would richly repay us for our separation. We owe a debt to all suffering humanity, since kind hands have made our sufferings less."

"Tell me your thought," said the judge; "your face proves that it is a pleasant one."

Netta repeated her mother's words.

"How came your mother to be such a sufferer, my dear? Don't answer unless

you choose; but the Captain has told me so much about you all that I feel interested."

"Does he know about the accident, sir?"

"I think not — at least, he never mentioned it."

"I said I would tell you last night, and I will try. We never speak of it. Mamma avoids it; but I am sure she will not mind telling you. It brings up such painful scenes that sometimes it makes me feel ill, — the horrid burning, the rush of waters, and the dreadful, dreadful sights!"

"Don't tell me, dear, then. You shall rest here, and not be tortured. I shall treat you as if you were my own dear Isa; who would have been a woman now. You remind me of her, and yet you are unlike."

"I should like you to know something, sir — one thing at least," said the girl with conscious pride. "We were not always

poor; we once had a beautiful home like this."

"I suspected it; so did Brown; indeed, he knew it from the first. The fellow delights in hunting up fine people in unfortunate circumstances. Do you know, he said yesterday that the next generation would learn how to manage better; that it would keep people from getting into the slums rather than picking them out, and if he had a fortune — I wish the boy had a veritable Bank of England — if he had a fortune, he would spend it on people of refinement who were reduced in circumstances; for they alone know the worth of mere money, and could feel its loss keenly."

"Isn't he noble?"

"I wish he belonged to me," said the judge. "Like Sir William Wallace with Edwin Ruthven, I want to claim him as my own."

"But Edwin asked Sir William to call him brother."

"Ho! ho! So she reads, does she?"

"Oh, mamma read us all those things long ago, when we lived in Florida."

"In Florida? My poor sister died there, the last of our once large family — save me."

"Were you ever there?"

"Oh, yes; I went at the end, and left her husband there. He died, poor fellow, soon after, while I was in Europe."

"Mamma was happy at Fort Brooke."

"Fort Brooke? Why, my sister's husband was there!"

"Was he? How pleased mamma would be to see any one who was ever at Fort Brooke."

"Where was your mother educated, my dear?"

"In a convent, sir; you see, grandpa had lost all his children; and when mamma was born he sent her away at once to a Northern convent, and she did not know when her own mother died. Her father would not let her be brought to Florida until she

was older. When he died, one of the sisters took her there, and left her with her uncle, her father's brother."

"My poor sister's children all died," said the judge. "It seemed almost like a terrible judgment to her, and I think it killed her at last."

"Tell me about the young lady, please," said Netta, suddenly remembering her charge.

"My Isa? She was my brother's daughter," said he, "and the story is a long and sad one; yet I love to talk of her. It is time for me to drive now, my little girl, and you shall go with me if you will not mind my taking up more than half the room."

"I shall be quite willing to allow you two-thirds of it," said she.

"Then I will talk of my dear girl as we drive; for the doctor insists on plenty of fresh air, and we will be gone some time."

"That will be delightful. Do you know, it seems to me that I must be dreaming, living here in your house, riding in your carriage, and seeing all these things; it reminds me of poor papa so much and the old days."

"How much your father must have loved you!" said the judge, as he looked at the trim figure and beautiful face.

"It was nearer worship, I think, sir; he never saw Natty, you know."

Thomas was ready now, so was nurse, Nancy, and all the rest of the household; for the daily drive was a great event since the terrible shock, and all in the house were anxious to see if the master could use his poor right foot even a little better than on the previous day. He was improving; he leaned less heavily on Thomas and his crutch, and even Nancy smiled triumphantly as the judge placed his lame foot upon the cushions without assistance. Mopsy followed him, and unconsciously made a

charming picture as she leaned from the carriage door to take a pillow from Nancy.

"She looked like she was in a frame," said cook; "and I do hope she won't go away for a while, the judge is so fond of her, and her ways are so like Miss Isa's."

They were gone a long time; but the story of Isa was not told, there was so much to see and admire. When they returned, Captain Brown stood on the steps to receive them, with a package of letters in his hand.

"Welcome home, travellers," said he; and in another moment Netta was absorbed in a letter from her mother.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MOPSY HEARS THE STORY OF ISA.

"WHO was the travelling companion from the Hills?" asked Captain Brown that afternoon, when the trio of friends were seated on the piazza.

"The same one who brought your telegram," replied Netta; "she bowed to you."

"Yes, I saw that she did; but I did not remember her. I met her on the street to-day."

"How I should like to see her!" said Netta. "You have no idea how good she is."

"Every one seems to be good in your eyes," said the judge, laughing.

"Not Mr. Manning," said Netta with a shudder; "I can never think of poor Spud without wishing to punish him."

"You need dread him no longer," said the Captain quietly; "he died in prison last week."

"Are you sure — quite sure?" asked Netta.

"Very sure; and henceforth I am the guardian of your friends Jamsie and Tishy."

"O Captain, I am so glad for them! Perhaps it is wrong, — I hope it is not, — but I am glad for everybody. Poor Mrs. Gaffney dreaded his coming back, and she has gone too."

"What does the good mother say about your return?" asked the Captain, as he saw her face growing pitiful and sad.

"She hopes it may be soon; she had received your letter, asking her to let me remain until the judge is able to go up, and she is quite willing, if I can be of use."

"Of course you can. Why, Brown, she prepared a breakfast for me that would be the envy of the *chef* at Young's." (Netta tried to speak.) "And this morning she

entertained me with a story told her by this eccentric good friend of hers. What is her name?"

"Mrs. Sweeton, sir; Hannah Sweeton."

"Yes, that's it; well, she told me a story that would rouse your indignation if you are the coolest fellow in Boston."

"It was perfectly true, too," said Netta. "You must remember the bargain, judge; you are to tell a story to-morrow."

"That I will do; I am so grateful to the Princess for sparing you to me that I am ready to consent to almost anything."

The Princess did not know that her fame had extended so far. The judge had long letters from his children, telling him a dozen things he must do, and as many more he must not; and the burden of all was: "Get well enough to travel, and come to us at once."

"Why does Captain Brown go away so much?" asked Netta the next day of the judge, when they were in the library.

"Partly on his own business, partly on mine. Brown has some trouble on his mind. He does not tell me all of it, but he says every clew to the business in hand breaks at a certain point. He has been working over it for several months now."

"Oh, dear!" said Netta wearily; "everybody has a tangle. I wish they had not. There is Miss Walker, the doctor's pretty sister. I was almost envying her, and lo! it turned out that her lover died just as they were ready to be married, and her house was all furnished and her wedding-gifts arranged. Jamsie is right; the tangles are everywhere."

"How is it with you, child?" asked the judge, as he secretly wished he might spare her from all evil.

"I have always been in a tangle, somehow; but mamma says the end is peace if the heart is right."

The judge was silent for a moment; then he said kindly, —

"My dear, will you bring me my watch from my room up-stairs?"

Netta hurried away to get it, wondering why a watch was required, when the beautiful clock on the library mantel struck every half-hour.

He took it from her hand when she returned, and opened the seal, but did not look at it.

"Now, my child, I will tell you the story."

He repeated it to her much as he had done to the Captain; but long before he had finished the recital Netta had nestled close to his side, and laid her hand on his arm.

He knew she was crying softly, although he could not see her face.

"There, there, child! I should not have told you all this; you have seen so much sorrow now."

"I am glad to hear it, glad to know it, and I love her too. No wonder she was

fond of you; no wonder her poor heart was broken; it was worse than poor mamma going out of school to find herself an orphan."

"If we could only find some trace of her," said the judge; "if we only knew where she went, who cared for her, and, if she is dead, who was with her when she died; I could rest easier if I knew."

"Could you never see the coachman?"

"Never; I should hang him if I could. He changed his name a dozen times or more, the rascal!"

"Did you never hear from him?"

"Once only, and then in a strange way. He sent a messenger, telling me that my niece was in the village of Bolton, sick and needy, and would like some money. I sent the money, but soon found that no such person had ever been in Bolton. At another time I received a strange letter from a small town in Canada, asking for aid, as she was ill and insane, but still refused to see me. I sent the money again; it was

received by a strange woman, and my agent could not find any trace of the parties. Then came another message: 'You will be troubled no more at present; your niece died in an insane asylum.'"

Netta listened attentively. Canada — insane — moving about. Could it be?

A sudden light seemed to come to her. "If it is true, if I am right, how can I tell him? A sudden shock might kill him now, and perhaps I am quite wrong." Mrs. Gaffney's words came to her with renewed force: —

"Promise that you'll keep seekin' and seekin' until you find the gentleman they was to find."

"Judge," said Netta, in tones fairly tremulous with suppressed excitement, "do you think that your niece was ever here in Boston?"

"Oh, no, no! she could not have kept away from me, for the poor child knew how I loved her."

"Do you suppose that she had any children?"

"No, no; I think she died broken-hearted, believing that I, her uncle, sent her from me because she was in my way. My poor, poor Isa!"

"Dear judge, I am only a young girl, and not very wise, but I think I could find out something about her; may I try?"

The judge raised his tear-stained eyes to look at her, and met her flushed, eager face.

"You, child — you? What could you do, where detectives, lawyers, and agents have failed? It is kind in you to think of it, generous to offer, and I bless you for it; but it is useless, — the mystery will never be cleared up."

"Dear judge, may I try? May I ask questions, and see papers and letters? May I have one chance to set your kind heart at rest?"

What answer could he make to such an

appeal? "Yes, child, you may try; but it is hopeless," he said, as he raised her hand to his lips.

"Will you forgive me if I seem to neglect you? Will you be patient if I am impatient? Will you never condemn me if I should fail?"

"Dear heart," said the judge, "I should be so sorry to have you fail that I warn you not to begin. I do not see the faintest ray of hope."

"I do; but I must not spoil all by over-eagerness. To-morrow I must go away, and I will ask Captain Brown to go with me. I may not come back to you at once; if I do not, you will know why. Please do not speak of this to Captain Brown; let me tell him in my own way, and if I succeed" —

"If you find *one* proof, *one* fact connected with her life after she left me, I shall call it success; hitherto it has been all mystery most profound, and bitter mis-

ery, for I fear some of my own family are concerned in it."

"Still you wish to learn all the truth?"

"All, child. Without a full knowledge of the entire affair I could not properly do justice to living or dead. You look like one inspired, child. Tell me what you think."

She leaned over, and whispered in his ear.

"Father of mercies!" said he, "I think you may be right; and, if you *are*, how can I ever reward you?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

SEEKING AND SEEKING.

ALL the next day Netta Howard was busy, so busy that she scarcely tasted the food Inky's mother prepared for her.

On the previous evening the judge had retired early, and Netta had held a long conference with the Captain. It resulted in his going with her first to a house in Dover Street to find Mrs. Sweeton, and thence to the old Endicott Street Home.

The two women sat in the reading-room turning over papers and letters on one of the tables.

"The bundle will be here to-morrow," said Mrs. Sweeton. "Jim said he would hand it to Jack Overly, and he comes in first; so, if you can help me find the way down to the Fitchburg Depot, why,

we can have more to prove it as far as I know."

Captain Brown came in and sat down beside the table.

"How do you succeed thus far?" he asked.

"Excellently," replied Netta; "only it seems almost irreverent to touch these things."

"Think of the result if your search leads to success. I thought of applying to you for aid in this very work, and yet you are doing it at your own desire, and far better than I could have done."

"If Mrs. Gaffney were only here now, she would be so happy to assist us," said Netta.

"She is doubtless happier," replied he; "but I came to remind you that the boys, your boarders, are already aware of your presence in town, and they insist on giving you a little ovation this evening. Will you be too weary to see them?"

"Never; it would rest me, and I want to thank them for keeping things in such good order."

"Perhaps Mrs. Sweeton will stay too."

The good woman declared herself ready to see all the sights, as that was what she came to Boston for, only the folks up to Jim's girl's might think she was lost.

Captain Brown sent a messenger boy to reassure them, and then went out to order a substantial dinner for Miss Howard and her companion.

He had much more to do than he anticipated in settling up Mrs. Gaffney's affairs, and the task was by no means unpleasant; for the good woman's bit in the bank proved to be a snug sum, — the accumulation of years.

"How little I thought," said he, "when I first came here, led by such a faint, almost hopeless, clew, that I should now be the means of furnishing so much happiness! Whittier was right: —

"'Life made by duty epical
And rhythmic with the truth.'"

The judge had retired when the Captain and Miss Howard reached home that night, after seeing Mrs. Sweeton safe among her friends.

Netta was glad of this. She did not wish to answer any questions until Mrs. Sweeton had received her package from home, and certain other witnesses were taken care of. She was not forgotten, however, for on her table she found a note addressed to herself. She opened it, and read: —

"Do not weary yourself, dear child, and do not grieve if your loving, generous service comes to naught. 'The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small.' It will all come right by and by, and I must wait and hope.

Your faithful friend,

J. B. H."

She did not need the initials to remind her that the judge was her correspondent;

he had written this just before retiring, lest she might come back disheartened.

"Dear good man!" said the girl; "I would not spend these long summer days in this search, if I did not feel sure that I could obtain his *one fact*, which will make him happy."

The next morning she went away again, and was tired and pale when night came. The judge was waiting for her, and declared that the work must cease at once.

"No, no!" exclaimed Netta earnestly; "it would ruin all to delay now; even Captain Brown is more hopeful, and, dear Judge, you must indulge me for a few days longer."

Not one word of her hard labor and her wearisome search was reported to the little family among the hills; even Mr. Harry and his wife were kept in ignorance; and it was generally supposed that dear Netta, as they loved to call her, was enjoying delightful leisure.

"I couldn't bear to disappoint so many," said Netta to the Captain; "and mamma would worry about me if she knew."

Meantime, the judge was gaining every day, and his physician thought he would be able to travel in the course of another week.

Netta read letters, and searched among old account-books, finding in each new proof of the belief which had crept into her heart.

"When you are quite ready for my share of the work I will produce it," said the Captain one morning, as he went into the reading-room with a handful of letters. "You have found the missing link for me."

"Really, truly?" exclaimed Netta, rising up in her eagerness.

"Really and truly," answered the Captain cheerfully. "Sad as all this is to me, your enthusiasm has made me look on the bright side."

"Why should it be sad to you?" asked Netta. "You are trying to prove some-

thing to make your friend happy. So am I. And now we can tell him, can we not?"

"This very night, I think, if you can complete your condensed report; we will omit the sad details until he is stronger and can read them better, for himself."

"And I may bring Mrs. Sweeton home with me to-night?"

"Certainly; she is an important witness."

"How shall we tell him? I do not know where to begin."

"He will question you like a lawyer, as he is; and we will all answer him; thus, we can avoid painful detail."

"And his wife?"

"Heaven help her! she has made us all wretched."

"Why do you say 'us'?"

"You would make a good lawyer yourself," he replied evasively.

"I detest quarrels; I should never succeed."

Mrs. Sweeton was very much flattered when Netta invited her to spend the night at Brookline. Her best gown was brushed and rebrushed many times for the occasion; and she had already planned a course of "strengthenin' medicine" for the judge which might have alarmed a famous practitioner like Dr. Crosby, had he been informed of it.

The evening was very warm, and the air was free from dampness; so the good judge received them on the broad piazza.

"I am a hundred per cent better to-day," said he, "and I know I could go in to my office with perfect ease, Brown, if you and Crosby were not such abominable tyrants."

"When you return from the country you can do so with safety," replied the Captain.

"So my little friend has met with some success to-day, has she? I see it in her face," said the judge, taking Netta by the hand as she came up the steps.

"Glorious success, Judge. You are to have it for your dessert."

She was about to pass on to her room when he detained her.

"Answer one question, child," he said.

"Twenty, if you like."

"Is my little girl living and suffering, or is she beyond it all?"

"Beyond it all," replied Netta, as she looked into his benevolent face and kindly eyes. "Beyond it all; but she left you a legacy."

He did not seem to hear the concluding sentence, but simply repeated her words to himself; and, as she passed on through the hall, she heard him still saying, "Beyond it all."

The dinner was over, and Mrs. Sweeton was seated on the porch where she could look over the garden with its fountain and statuettes.

"It's about the bewtifullist spot I ever see," said she, "only I can't say as I like

"So My Little Friend has met with Some Success," said the Judge.

to have those naked boys and girls stuck up all around."

Her remark was addressed to Netta, who merely smiled as she heard Mrs. Sweeton's "art criticism," she drew a chair close to the judge. Captain Brown was talking with Thomas at the foot of the steps.

"Now, child, I will hear your story," said the judge. "You tell me Isa is not living?"

"Not living, sir; but her children are."

"Isa's children!" exclaimed the judge.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

"THOMAS," said Captain Brown, "you must tell the first part, I think. Tell the whole, as you have told it to me. There is nothing to fear, now. The judge insists on hearing it all."

"I was only a boy," said Thomas, "and it has worried me awfully ever since. There has been times when I thought I must go away. Mistress told me I should be arrested for stealing if I did, and I was scared. Then it all seemed sort of forgotten by everybody but me. I had gone into the carriage-house, one night, to rig a boat, and pretty soon mistress came in, talking to the coachman. She said she would see that he had money; but I did not know what for. He talked with her

a good deal, and at different times. At last, one night, when they were talking I coughed, and I thought mistress would kill me; she threatened to have me put in jail unless I swore to do as she told me. One night, I was called up out of bed to go somewhere with mistress; the judge was away from home, and the coachman was going with her, but would not come out home again. I dressed myself, and went out to the stable. Mistress was there all dressed in black, with something over her face; but I knew her voice, and our young lady was with her, crying as if she might die. At the last she cried so, that they lifted her into the carriage, and made me get in. I don't know where we drove; I could not see, and I had all I could do to mind the horses while the coachman and the ladies went inside. After a while mistress came out, and the man too, but not our young lady. The coachman drove us part way home, and then pulled me

out of the carriage, and made me drive home and put up the horses, and said if ever I breathed a word of all I had seen, a secret enemy would always watch me and blow my brains out. Mistress gave me some new clothes next day and ten dollars in money. She often gave me money after that, to see after Mr. Harry. She said our young lady was sent to a convent to school at master's request; but when the new coachman came he said our old one had run away to marry an heiress, and everybody knew it. I felt sorry for Mr. Harry; so I stayed on, and I thought I would tell the judge some day if I ever had a chance; but I have been afraid, and I hope your honor will forgive me."

The judge sat with his firm white lips pressed together painfully, but no word escaped him.

"Where did you send the trunks and boxes after that, Thomas?" asked the Captain.

"To a little place among the mountains. I have the name written down; I have kept it ever since."

The man passed a piece of paper to the judge.

"Now, Mrs. Sweeton, you may tell your story," said Netta; "and, dear Judge, please do not look so grieved; Isa's children will be yours."

He pressed her hand in silence.

Mrs. Sweeton told the story of the strange man and woman, her boarders, of the letters written by the aunt, of the money sent, and the words written on the window curtain.

"Let me see those letters," demanded the judge.

Mrs. Sweeton gave them to him. He read but one, and then groaned aloud, —

"True, too true; God help me!"

Captain Brown went to him, and asked if he might not spare himself further pain by hearing only the conclusion.

Without a shade of anger on his broad, kindly face, without one word of reproach for those whose sin had caused so much misery, he answered, —

"Let me hear all, Brown, every word."

As Mrs. Sweeton concluded, Captain Brown took up the story, purposely leaving out much that might wound his sensitive nature.

"I have all the proofs from Canada, where they lived. There was a real marriage here in Boston, of which I have the necessary proof. There was a brief sojourn with this good woman, also much moving about and many changes. The firstborn, a frail boy, is my ward Spud, or Jamsie, and little Tishy is her youngest. Everywhere, the mother was known as a beautiful young woman, always sad, always gentle, especially after her children came. The pastor of a little Canadian church urged her to tell him of her friends, without avail. He was sure that some secret cause, which she dared not

reveal, had led her to become the wife of the coarse creature who claimed to be her lawful husband. While they remained away from here, money was sent them in small sums; but there came a time when the poor wife longed and prayed to see her old home once more. She travelled with her children to Boston, was taken ill on the way, and was overtaken by her husband, who immediately placed her in an obscure home in this city, where she died. He secretly obtained money from a friend here. Isa's children are now orphans, and I have been duly appointed their guardian. They will love you as their mother did; and, I hope, bless your old age."

"Thank you, Brown; thank you," said the judge wearily.

"Netta, my dear child, you have indeed proved your one fact. God bless you. To-morrow we will talk more of this."

He kissed her tenderly, shook hands with Mrs. Sweeton, and thanked her for coming,

and then, leaning on the Captain's arm, went slowly to his room.

An hour later his bell rang, and all feared another attack; but it was not so. He was rested now, and would like to have Netta and the Captain sit with him and tell him more about those precious children.

They went to him, and found him looking better than he had done.

"It might have been worse," he said. "But the dear child should have written; even one line from her would be precious. Did you mention something about a letter?"

"Yes; I have one here. When our dear young friend found herself dying she wrote it, and intrusted it to Mrs. Gaffney, her landlady, who lost it, or rather had it taken from her by her husband; it has cost many weeks of labor to find any clew to that letter. A short time since I gave it up for lost; but, this week, I received a letter from a man in Connecticut, the object of my long search. It was found in

picking over some rags at a paper-mill, and its pitiful story impressed the reader. The name was nearly erased; but in one corner was written, 'I intrust this to Mrs. Mary Gaffney, of Endicott Street, Boston.' The person who found it read it to a clerk, who put it away, and forgot it entirely, until he chanced to see my name as executor of the estate of Mary Gaffney attached to the usual notice in the papers. The name of the person to whom the letter was addressed does not appear within, as you see, and the direction is partly obliterated; one who had seen it could understand it."

The judge took the torn and worn sheet into his hand as some men might caress a child. When lights were brought and his glasses given him they bade him good-night and went away.

The Captain was the first to greet him the next morning, and he was astonished to see him so cheerful. His amazement

was observable, for the judge made haste to say, —

"You thought the shame would overcome me, my friend. I shall put it behind me, and live, I trust, to make these dear children very happy. There is one thing, Brown, I want done, and that is to shield the woman who bears my name. It was a cruel sin, and the innocent victim is beyond it all; for myself, I shall always remember that she is Harry's mother."

A few days later his words came back to the Captain with deeper meaning.

"I want more than ever to do something for Miss Howard, and you must help me, Brown; she seems quite like one of ourselves."

"She is, indeed, Judge."

"What do you mean?"

"Only this, that in trying to find a dear relative of my own I found several for you. Your sister's child was sent to a convent, and did not die, as you supposed. She

married an army officer, who was drowned when the Nina Belle was burned near Natchez. Mrs. Howard is that niece, and her helplessness was caused by the shock and injuries sustained at the time of the accident."

"Stop one moment, Brown; let me think. She was kept entirely under the care of the sisters, was she not?"

"For many years. Her father never mentioned her mother to her, and she had been kept in ignorance concerning her relatives. I found out something about her father's affairs; he was quite wealthy, and his brothers settled the estate to suit themselves. During my numerous and suspicious journeys I was collecting facts. In a short time Mrs. Howard will receive about thirty thousand dollars which is her just due. The uncles opposed the marriage with Colonel Howard, and an estrangement was the result."

"How did she get into that locality?"

"By the merest accident. The stewardess of the boat was saved. She was much attached to the party, and proposed that they should come to Boston, as she had a sister here. Mrs. Howard was anxious to have her children receive a New England education, and in her weak and suffering condition she was glad to resign herself and children to the care of this woman. The sister lived in Mrs. Gaffney's house. She has since moved West, where the stewardess has joined her. Mrs. Howard's injuries proved so serious that she has never been moved until now, and her small pension has only kept them from actual want."

"And this long, weary search you have kept up all alone, Brown?" said the judge. "Why did you not tell me before?"

"I have been cruelly disappointed myself, and I wished to spare you that pain. We both have enough to endure."

"But you did not find out about Isa until Netta began the search?"

"Something, but not all. Miss Howard found the right end of the tangle among the Berkshire Hills."

"Mr. Brown, it was here in this very house. I had a letter to-day. Harry's mother will sail for home in the Caledonia the 3d of September."

Captain Brown did not reply.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANOTHER CORNER OF THE KINGDOM.

POUND, pound! hammer, hammer! all day long at the little farm among the Berkshires.

"What under the canopy are those city folks doing up there?" asked an old farmer of Hannah Sweeton, who was coming down the avenue to the river-bank.

"Well, as far as I know, they are havin' a jubilee."

"But the buildings, I mean?"

"Oh, the buildings! Well, the house is being enlarged for Mrs. Howard, and the new barn is for some hay and stock."

"Ain't the fine-lookin' old gentleman with the smilin' face and white hair Judge Hunt from Boston?"

"Yes; and there's everlastin' goodness 'nough in him to make a whole jury of"—

"I seen him once down there to a trial; he looks like the world went easy with him."

"You never heard of looks bein' deceitful, have you?"

"Well, yes; but who's the other chap, who gets such a sight of comfort lying down the river there in a boat a-reading books?"

"Job Cheeney, ef you want the history of them folks up there you better go right up an' ask 'em. I hain't got any time to waste on yer now, fer them children are all wanted to come up to the house at once."

Hannah Sweeton hurried on to the river-bank, and called loudly, "Natty! Natty!"

In a few moments the boy appeared, climbing the steep bank with a large bunch of flowers in his hand. He was followed by three or four others likewise burdened.

"Didn't we get a lot, though?" exclaimed Tishy.

"I sha'n't put all mine in the Boston box for the flower mission, 'cause I want uncle to have the very bestest ones."

"Land sake!" said Hannah Sweeton, as she looked at them; "how did them city folks ever come to think of a 'country week' for those poor things? I declare it's enough to make you laugh and cry all to once to see 'em so crazy over the flowers; an' Miss Howard, she will keep havin' 'em come, — two this week and two next, and so on. I expect we shall have half Boston running over our pastures after a while. Run right home, now, children. Mrs. Howard said I was to tell you; and now I better step right smart myself, or dad will miss his milk biscuit for supper."

Can we frame the picture of the home-life among those glorious hills in any form more simple and natural than the words of Hannah Sweeton?

Dad's biscuits were made snowy inside and brown without, and dad was eating

them with generous slices of new sweet butter spread upon them, as he asked, —

"Well, Hanner, what are the city folks up to now? Got any more of them little starved-out children?"

"Two more come to-day, dad, an' it would do your heart good to see 'em."

"Yes, jes' so; it's curious to see 'em walk all round a flower for fear of steppin' on it, and one of them boys will watch a pig or a steer for twenty minutes on a stretch."

"Why shouldn't they, dad? A steer 's a big curiosity to 'em as Barnum's greatest furrin animal; but I must tell ye about the time up to the farm to-day. You see, the judge, he set out to surprise Mrs. Howard and her daughter, and the first he knew he was the most surprised man you ever see in all your life. Most of his folks is dead, and the Captain, he hunted up and found out that Mrs. Howard was the judge's own niece, and they wouldn't

let it out until it was her birthday, — that's to-day; and that's why they asked me up to kind of help 'round the dinner; so she wouldn't suspect nothin'. Miss Netta, she was a-trimmin' up for her ma's birthday, and the folks was over from Cliff Cottage, with little Bessie, and they were havin' a splendid time. You see, that little sick fellow, Jamsie, he's been pickin' up ever since his uncle got that pony for him, and the whole of 'em thought nothin' more good could happen; but the Captain's bin very uneasy, a-goin' into Boston and all that, and givin' me ever so many boxes and things to hide away, and Mrs. Harry, she had made a white muslin dress for Miss Netta, all unknown to her, for her ma's birthday, and then she had sent me a beautiful desk and some books for Mrs. Howard, and everybody was so brimful of pleasure, there didn't seem to be room for no more."

"Easy to be good-natured and happy if you have plenty of money, Hanner."

"Don't talk nonsense, dad! Why, money can't make you strong and well, or save you from dying! I tell you, those folks over there make you think of something besides money."

"Well, go on, Hanner. I suppose the dinner was tip-top."

"Yes; you couldn't eat one half. You see, the judge came over from the Cliff, and said it was his right, as the oldest member, to take charge of the birthday entertainment; and they all agreed; but, bless you! they never dreamed what was comin'."

"Well, get round to it when you can, Hanner."

"I will, dad, if you won't break in so often. Well, they had all eaten their ice-cream and their sherbet"—

"For massy sake! what's sherbet?"

"Now, dad, there you are again! They had all eaten their ice-cream and frozen colored water, when the judge he got up, and told 'em all how he had lost his eld-

est sister, and how after all these years he had found her child, and how happy he was about it; and they all looked at Jamsie and Tishy; but they was his niece's children. Well, they sort of wondered a while, and then he went round and he took Mrs. Howard's face between his hands and kissed her right there and then. She was awfully s'prised, and you oughter hev seen Miss Netta when she found out that it was all true. I thought she would never stop cryin' and laughin', and the judge took her right in his arms like she was a baby. Natty was so wild he screamed until he was hoarse, and Mr. and Mrs. Harry were so tickled they kept shakin' hands with everybody. I never expect to see such a sight again — never. I kind of pitied the Captain. He walked away, and looked out of the window, until Miss Netta, she see him and brought him up before them all, and sez she, 'This is the good genius who brought us all our happiness;'

and the judge, he took hold of him, and sez he, 'Brown, I wish I could find a few such relatives for you as you've done for me. Why, I am the happiest man in all Massachusetts!' The Captain couldn't speak for a moment, and then sez he, 'Uncle, I shall be compelled to introduce myself as John Brown Hunt, Jr.'"

"What yer cryin' fer, Hanner?"

"I ain't cryin' egsactly, dad, but I can't think of it without wantin' to; for you see it was a kind of a resurrection day, and I don't think one of 'em can be happier when they get to heaven. There was the poor Captain, who has been a wanderer, he says, for years and years, workin' and workin' to do some good while he was huntin' for his poor sister, and he a-knowing his uncle all the time after that night in the Public Garden, and never speakin' of it; and there was Mrs. Howard livin' such a hard life, and Miss Netta goin' on, on, on, workin' for them boarders, beside

poor little Jamsie, half dead, and no mother to care for him, and it all comin' out so beautiful just through doin' little things for others; and there was Jim Lahey, a poor Irish boy once, now dressed as nice as our minister, and Inky and his mother and all of 'em — why, dad, it makes me feel kind of mean to think of us just workin' and workin' for our own two selves and Jim! You see, when they got over the surprise a little, and the judge had cried over the Captain like a woman over her dead baby, Miss Netta, she got up and she said she wanted to give every cent of Mrs. Gaffney's money to the Industrial Home in Boston to help other boys and girls so they could help themselves; and then Mr. Harry said the executor would have something to say about that, and the Captain said it was all her own to do as she pleased with. O dad, I couldn't tell the best part of it if I talked all night! And I haven't said one word about our part. You

see, when I was comin' off, the Captain, he said he owed Jim a little something for taking down so many flower-boxes to the mission; so he gave me a twenty-dollar gold-piece to buy a wedding-present for Jim; and when I told 'em they would be married this fall, and come up here and go to housekeepin' in the other side of our house, every one of 'em said they would come over and help fit the rooms all up; and, dad, here we've been a-talkin' all our days about stuck-up city folks, and they a-doin' more goodness than we ever thought of in our whole lives. It kind of makes me feel ashamed to say my prayers."

Dad rose slowly, and took down his milk-pails. When he reached the door he turned around to say,—

"Hanner, I've allers stood out about havin' any of those poor children come up here; but if it would make you feel happier, why, we might take a couple of 'em for a week or two; there ain't no call for

us two to use sixty acres of land all to once, and they can't wear it out none."

For the first time since Jim was a wee baby lying on her arm Hannah Sweeton reached up to her husband's brown, rugged face and kissed him; and at that very moment Captain Hunt was saying, —

"I was right. One corner of the kingdom of heaven was at the North End."

"It is within us," said Mrs. Howard.

"And Jamsie's tangles are no more," said Netta, as she patted the boy's flushed cheek.

Over at Cliff Cottage Harry Hunt was lying on the porch settee, with his head in his wife's lap. He was looking into her eyes as she gently stroked his hair, but her thoughts were far away in the future.

"Puss," said her husband.

"Yes, dear?"

"Whenever you want me to go out and hang myself for being such a brute to you, just mention it."

"Harry!" was the response, in a tone of surprise.

"I mean it. I don't think any man intends to be a bad husband; but our false, hurried, artificial life in the city makes us all more or less selfish and exacting."

"You have been charming since you came here, Harry; it has seemed like another world."

"Children," said Judge Hunt, coming to them through the open window, "the Caledonia is lost, and all on board."

They turned to look at him; but he had dropped the evening paper, and had gone within.

After all, she was Harry's mother.

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